

King condoles family of pilot

RAKIN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah Sunday condoled the family of Naji Abdul Mahdi Habashneh, an Air Force pilot who died in a fighter jet crash five days ago during a training exercise. During the visit to the Habashneh family's home in the village of Rakin in Karak governorate, King Abdullah, accompanied by HRH Prince Hashim and officials, enquired about the needs of the pilot's family and directed that they be attended to. The Habashneh tribes renewed their allegiance to the King and to the Hashemite Throne. A military spokesman earlier said the plane crashed Wednesday morning during a routine training flight. The spokesman said the two pilots on board the two-seater F-5 jet ejected. The trainee survived, but the trainer, Habashneh, died upon impacting the ground. Habashneh, 37, was laid to rest on Thursday in Rakin.

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Israel launches offensive in Lebanon after top general killed

Further military actions 'on land, by sea and in the air' promised

Agencies

ISRAELI LEADERS vowed to retaliate "on land, by sea and in the air" after the Islamist militia Hezbollah killed Israel's top general in occupied south Lebanon on Sunday.

While Israeli artillery and warplanes pounded suspected Hezbollah bases and other targets deep inside Lebanon, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel had "hit back and we are ready to strike even more strongly" following the killing of Brigadier General Erez Gerstein.

General Shaul Mofaz, the chief of military staff, said Israeli forces would continue "these offensive actions on land, by sea and in the air."

Mofaz said the airstrikes were part of a military action that would continue "as long as needed."

Gerstein was killed with two other soldiers and an Israeli journalist when Hezbollah detonated a roadside bomb next to their convoy in the buffer zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon.

It was the second major setback inflicted by Hezbollah on Israel in five days after the movement's guerrillas killed one commander of an elite Israeli paratroop unit and two of his lieutenants in south Lebanon.

Netanyahu, who is in a tough race for relection in May, told a press conference at the defence ministry that Israeli warplanes had already targeted a Hezbollah headquarters in the Bekaa "while being careful not to cause any civilian casualties."

Mofaz said Israel adhered to a three-year-old understanding with the Hezbollah to avoid civilian targets.



An Israeli assault helicopter flies close to the Israel-Lebanon border in northern Lebanon on Sunday. Israel promised a sustained offensive in Lebanon following the death of Israeli Brig. Gen. Erez Gerstein, the chief liaison officer between Israel and the SLA, who was killed in a Hezbollah attack in southern Lebanon (AP photo)

In Beirut, Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss said he had asked for U.S. and French assistance to halt the Israeli air strikes on Lebanon.

"Lebanon is again a victim of Israeli aggressions which targeted civilians and safe regions," he told AFP.

"This is a violation against Lebanese sovereignty," he said. Hoss said he had contacted

French Ambassador to Lebanon Daniel Jouanneau and U.S. Charge d'Affaires David Hill for assistance in getting Israel to halt its bombardment of Lebanon.

There was no immediate word in Lebanon on casualties from the Israeli strikes, but ambulances rushed to the scene of the attack on Baalbek.

He said other sites hit included Hezbollah depots for ammu-

nition, Katyusha rockets and other military equipment.

Lebanese security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the planes struck in Baalbek and in the hills and valleys facing the Israeli-occupied zone in southern Lebanon.

They said a Palestinian base at Naameh, eight kilometres south of Beirut, was also attacked by Israeli planes. No casualties were reported there.

The base belongs to the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

The planes' targets ranged from 10 to 100 kilometres from the Israeli border.

"This strike is indicative of our determination," Netanyahu said.

"This is not our last response," added Netanyahu's hawkish new defence minister, Moshe Arens.

Hezbollah's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, hailed his guerrillas' "victorious" killing of Gerstein on Sunday as a turning point for future resistance operations.

"This new victory will undoubtedly be the start of a great turning point in the operations of the resistance and the hopes of the people," said Nasrallah in a statement in Beirut.

"It will leave important effects on the nations of the region, particularly in Lebanon and Palestine," said the group's secretary general.

"With the wretched Zionist general, falls the great myth," he said, referring to the Israeli army's tough image.

"It made our confidence grow in God and in the capability of the resistance to liberate [the land] and shape the future," he added.

(Continued on page 7)

Three dead in U.S. attacks, vital oil pipeline damaged, Iraq says

Agencies

THREE IRAQIS were killed, including a child, and several others were injured Sunday in U.S. air raids on "farming villages" in the northern no-fly zone, an Iraqi military spokesman said as Baghdad reported a vital oil pipeline had also been hit.

"The crowds have once again violated our airspace in the north where they released their hateful bombs against farming villages in the Nineveh province, killing three innocent civilians," he said, quoted by the official INA news agency.

Three-year-old Mohsen Ibrahim and a shepherd, Mohammad Hussein, were among the dead, he said, adding that several other "civilians" were injured — leaving it unclear whether they were civilians or soldiers.

"Our valiant anti-aircraft defences resisted the vile assassins, forcing them to flee to their harmful bases where they took off in Turkey," the spokesman said.

The chief planning official at Iraq's oil ministry said later that a control station for an Iraqi-Turkish pipeline was hit, halting the flow of oil through the site.

Faleh Hassan Al Khayyat said half of Iraq's crude exports pass through the pipeline, which links oil fields in the northern city of Kirkuk with the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean.

"The attack inflicted severe damage to the facilities of the

station" and caused the "martyrdom of one of the station's attendants and the severe wounding of two others," he said, adding that no Iraqi anti-aircraft site was located near the facility.

It was unclear if the station's employee was one of the three people Iraq said earlier had died.

Khayyat said the man killed was an observer employed by the Iraqi government, who worked with the U.N. oil-for-food programme that monitors the flow through the pipeline.

A Turkish official at the Ceyhan oil terminal, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that the flow had stopped and said an attack had hit "energy transmission lines of a communications centre," which operates the pipeline, early Sunday evening.

"The attack resulted in the stoppage of crude oil pumping through the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline export system," he said.

"We are assessing the damage and assessing when we can eventually repair it, and what it requires," Khayyat said.

This attack constitutes another irony because it comes while the U.N. executives declare that more financial funds are required to cover the requirements of the oil-for-food programme," the U.N. agreement allowing Iraq to export limited amounts of oil in order to buy necessities.

"It also exposes the lying claims of the U.S. administration officials saying that they

endeavour to alleviate the hardships of the Iraqi people," he added.

The U.S. said in a statement earlier from Incirlik air base in Turkey that U.S. F-15C fighter jets launched three air-to-ground missiles and dropped three laser-guided bombs on an Iraqi air defense headquarters and radio relay site in the northern no-fly zone, in response to Iraqi anti-aircraft fire.

It said F-15s also dropped two GBU-12 and three GBU-24 precision guided bombs near the northern Iraqi town of Mosul.

There was no damage to coalition aircraft and damage to Iraqi forces "is currently under assessment," the statement said.

Those strikes were launched after Baghdad's reported refusal to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors.

The Iraqi spokesman said 11 formations of "enemy" planes, supported by AWACS radar

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday received the secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee, Mahmoud Abbas, for talks on bilateral relations and the peace process.

During the meeting, Abbas briefed King Abdullah on the

status of the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations and the Palestinian National Authority's efforts to remove obstacles to the process.

The King stressed Jordan's support for the Palestinian people in securing their legitimate rights and establishing an independent state on their national soil.

King Abdullah also emphasised the importance of exerting all possible efforts in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region.

Abbas expressed the Palestinian leadership's appreciation for the King's support.

HRH Prince Talal Ben

Mohammad, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, General Intelligence Department Director Samih Battikhi and other Jordanian and Palestinian officials attended the meeting.

Abbas later visited the grave of King Hussein and recited verses from Holy Koran.

(Continued on page 7)

Arab League asks U.S., Britain to stop attacking Iraq

CAIRO (AP) — The Arab League urged the United States and Britain on Sunday to "immediately cease all military acts" in Iraq and seek a diplomatic solution. The statement by the 22-member league came hours after U.S. planes attacked Iraqi air defence sites after coming under fire in the northern part of the country. "The secretariat general calls on the United States of America and Britain to cease immediately all military acts and to resort to diplomatic solutions in dealing with Iraq, according to related [U.N.] Security Council resolutions," the 22-member league said in a statement faxed to the Associated Press. The league said the attacks were causing death and destroying Iraq's facilities and infrastructure. Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saad Al Sahaf said last week that the air strikes were in preparation for a ground attack on Iraq.

aircraft, penetrated Iraqi air space at 1000 GMT and left at 1342 GMT after 21 sorties over the northern Dohuk, Erbil and Nineveh provinces.

Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said his country will "never" stop fighting U.S. and British aircraft that fly over Iraq.

"We are going to continue the fight. We can't consider the losses as much as the nation's defense," he told reporters.

On Saturday, Iraq said U.S.-British attacks in the south left 23 Iraqis wounded.

The United States and Britain have been staging regular raids on Iraqi air defences in the no-fly zones since December's Desert Fox air strikes.

Those strikes were launched after Baghdad's reported refusal to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors.

The Iraqi spokesman said 11 formations of "enemy" planes, supported by AWACS radar

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) is expected to announce plans for introducing its mobile telephone service by the end of March and will invite competition to participate in this service by 2002, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh announced Sunday.

Speaking to the press after a visit to the JTC to discuss future plans with its management, Tarawneh said the JTC is one of Jordan's major companies providing distinguished and essential services to the public (see related story on page 3).

The prime minister said the government, which currently owns the JTC, should not fully control the company in the future nor should such a privilege be granted to any single party.

The government will soon take a decision on the privatisation of the company now that the idea of a strategic

partner has been dropped, said Tarawneh, who pointed out that the government will open the door first to Jordanian investors, companies and banks to acquire equity in the company and later offer the opportunity to other investors from Arab states or funds. He added that a ceiling will be set for such shares so that no single party can have overall control of the company's operations.

Tarawneh said the government is giving due concern and attention to granting the private sector the opportunity to invest in the Kingdom's vital economic sectors.

Speaking at the meeting, attended by the JTC's board chairman, general manager and senior assistants, the prime minister commended the company's work, noting that since it was transformed into a company it has been progressing well

on a commercial basis as stipulated under the 1995 Telecommunications Law.

The JTC should work until the end of its concession in 2002 to raise its efficiency and standards to enable it to have a competitive edge.

Referring to the company's plans to introduce its own mobile phone service, Tarawneh said the JTC should deal with all matters connected with the projected service in a transparent manner in order to win credibility and reassure investors that Jordan is a state of law and institutions that protects and safeguards investors' rights.

Reiterating that the government will go ahead with the privatisation process, Tarawneh said the government and the JTC's board are determined to arrive at the best possible formula for the process with assistance from financial consultants who will be engaged

to offer their views.

An agreement has been reached to hold an enlarged meeting grouping the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, the JTC and other concerned parties, including the Cabinet, to reach a consensus on the sale of part of the company's shares to the private sector as stipulated by law.

JTC General Manager Mamoun Balqas outlined the company's plans, and Senior Engineer Mohammad Qarqash noted that all public requests for telephone services will be met by the end of 1999.

Qarqash said the JTC is planning to install 100,000 new telephone lines by the year 2003.

The company's mobile phone service will be the second in the country after that of the Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (Fastlink), whose exclusively period ended last November.



His Majesty King Abdullah and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu begin their first official meeting in Amman on Sunday (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King, Israeli PM hold first official meeting

Netanyahu reaffirms ties with Jordan, blames PNA for peace deadlock

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday sought to smooth feathers ruffled in Amman over remarks he made last week that called into question the Kingdom's commitment to peace.

Following his first official meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah, Netanyahu appeared in front of reporters along with Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh to set the record straight on his comments, made to students at Israel's Bar Ilan University, that caused a furor in political circles here and scandalized the left-leaning press in Israel.

"I do not believe that Jordan is weak," Netanyahu told reporters during a press conference at Basman Palace. "I believe Jordan is strong. It has

a stable government, a clear direction and a clear policy of peace and stability not only with Israel but in the entire area.

"Israel will have to [consider] what will happen to us on the day that Saddam Hussein [acquires] nuclear weapons. What will happen to us? What happened the last time Saddam was very strong? Who joined him? Jordan, under King Hussein, who is truly the knight of peace, a man who signed peace with us and even wanted to do so in 1990. Peace was in his nature. In 1991, he joined Saddam. Why?

Because Iraq was very strong. What will [a nuclear Iraq] do to its neighbours? What will it do to Jordan? It will put the whole region in danger and the eastern border as well.

(Continued on page 7)

Saudi Arabia set for two million pilgrims

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia has almost completed safety measures aimed at preventing a repeat of previous tragedies as this year's Haj begins.

With up to two million people on the move over the coming month, the biggest headaches are likely to be preventing fire, ensuring water supplies and avoiding stampedes.

A blaze in 1997 killed 343 pilgrims while up to 119 people died in a stampede last year.

Plane loads of pilgrims from around the world have started arriving in the Red Sea port of Jeddah from where they are taken to the nearby Holy City of Mecca in the west of the country.

Diplomats said most measures were in place, from doctors, water supplies and security to transport for the pilgrims who flock to the kingdom from around the world. "It all seems in place. The emphasis this year is 'do your best to help avoid any tragedies,'" said one Asian diplomat.

The diplomats said this year's Haj will see fewer pilgrims from Asia, mostly due to the region's economic crisis.

For example, only around 72,000 were expected from

Indonesia, down from last year's 200,000.

The pilgrimage reaches a climax on March 26 this year with the march to Mount Arafat, site of Prophet Mohammad's last sermon 14 centuries ago.

Half the pilgrims — both Saudis and foreign residents — come from inside the kingdom and the other half from abroad.

The kingdom in the past month issued warnings against using gas cylinders, approved plans to avert stampedes and completed a second phase to erect fire-proof tents.

Up to 10,000 medical staff have been put on round-the-clock call, health ministry officials said.

The tent project and the ban on gas cylinders started after the 1997 blaze which Saudi authorities blamed on pilgrims who tried to cook a meal on a gas fire inside a tent. Officials said huge water containers have been erected on hilltops overlooking the tent city on the plains of Mena to be used in extinguishing fires.

Pilgrimage Affairs Minister Mahmoud Mohammad Safar said the kingdom also planned to regulate the use of a bridge.

where the fatal 1998 stampede took place.

Saudi newspapers said on Sunday authorities had started issuing special Haj permits for Saudis and foreign residents.

The kingdom this year limited Saudi citizens to one Haj every five years to cut down on the growing number of Muslims performing the ritual — one of the five pillars of Islam.

Haj this year will not be free of political controversy over Iraqi and Iranian pilgrims.

U.N. Security Council members agreed this month to allow Iraqi pilgrims to receive funds through a neutral international organization so they could make the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Poor Iraqis lack access to needed funds due to U.N. economic and financial sanctions.

Last year Iraqi plane made an unauthorized flight to Saudi Arabia with sick and elderly pilgrims.

Iraq, as in the past, called for rallies against the United States and Israel at Haj in defiance of a Saudi ban against political activities during the event.

In 1987, 402 people, mostly Iranians, were killed in clashes with Saudi security forces at an Iranian-led rally. Iran boycotted the Haj for three years.



ARAFAT'S OPPONENT LAID TO REST: Crying Palestinian women carry flowers at the funeral of Samiha Khalil in Ramallah, on Sunday. Khalil, a social worker and political activist who challenged Yasser Arafat in the race for president of the Palestinian National Authority, died Friday night in Ramallah Hospital from heart attack at the age of 76 (AP photo)

Kurdish rebel leader sheds light on days as fugitive

ANKARA (AFP) — Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan has shed light on his time as a fugitive, seeking asylum in countries across Europe, before his capture by a Turkish commando, the Turkish press reported Sunday.

Ocalan, leader of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), was forced out of his long-term base in Syria on Oct. 9 as Damascus bowed to military threats from Ankara.

Turkey had long sought Ocalan's arrest on treason charges linked to the PKK's 15-year armed struggle for a Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey.

Ocalan was finally snatched by a Turkish commando on Feb. 15 in Kenya as he travelled to the airport after spending 12 days sheltering in the Greek ambassador's residence in Nairobi.

He was flown back to Turkey where he is awaiting trial on the prison island of Imrali in the Marmara Sea. If found guilty, he could face the death penalty.

Ocalan's capture followed a desperate journey across Europe which included arrest in Italy and an odyssey aboard a private plane turned away from airport after airport — as Turkey upped pressure on European leaders to return the fugitive to Ankara.

From Syria, Ocalan boarded a plane for Greece, the Turkish press reported, adding Ocalan claims he was treated badly by Greek authorities and forced out of the

country. Arriving in Moscow, Ocalan was aided by ultra-nationalist Deputy Vladimir Zhirinovsky. But after 33 days he was forced to leave due to pressure from Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, the press reported.

Ocalan fled to Italy, where he was arrested at Rome airport in November by police acting on international warrants.

But Italy refused to extradite Ocalan as he could face the death penalty if returned to Turkey. The move sparked a bitter diplomatic row between Rome and Ankara and led to a boycott of Italian goods in Turkey.

Germany, meanwhile, which had also issued a warrant for Ocalan's arrest, refused to demand his extradition amid fears over the reaction of its own large Turkish and Kurdish populations.

An Italian court ruled Ocalan was free to go — but Italian authorities made it clear he was not welcome to stay in the country. Ocalan was quoted as saying: He was escorted to Rome airport on Jan. 16 and left on board a private plane.

Ocalan said he returned to Moscow but was denied permission to stay. Earlier reports said his plane was also denied permission to land in the Netherlands and in several other European countries.

He then flew back to Greece, after being assured by two secret service agents he would be given shelter, the Turkish

press reported.

Instead, Ocalan said he was taken to Minsk where he waited four hours for a flight overnight Jan. 31 before returning to Greece a third time.

"I was taken on Feb. 2 to Nairobi after Greece and other European countries refused to have me," Ocalan said.

Greek embassy officials

promised him a passport and safe passage to South Africa. "But they did not keep their promise," he said.

"I was in a car belonging to a Kenyan official and the Greek ambassador was accompanying me in a second car. On the way to the airport I realised what had happened to me," he said, referring to his capture.

Ocalan's capture caused a wave of protests, some violent, across Europe as Kurds stormed Greek and Kenyan embassies demanding his release.

Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis is fighting for his political survival after sacking three ministers over the Ocalan affair.

Political leaders and human rights groups, meanwhile, fear Turkey will not grant Ocalan a fair trial.

On Sunday, Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema added his voice to those calling for justice, saying: "We are against terrorism and for Turkish territorial integrity, but we will not give up our support for democratic principles."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Liberal cleric in Iran thrown into jail

TEHRAN (AFP) — A liberal cleric close to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, was arrested late Saturday and jailed at Evin prison in Tehran, the official IRNA news agency reported Sunday. Hojatoleslam Mohsen Kadivar is also close to liberal circles and to dissident Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, who was once tipped to become the nation's spiritual "guide" but who fell into disgrace in 1989. Kadivar's arrest was ordered by a special religious tribunal set up in 1985 by the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to rule on offences implicating members of the Shi'ite clergy in Iran.

Iran slams U.S. human rights report

TEHRAN (R) — Iran on Sunday angrily rejected a U.S. State Department report rating the country's human rights record as "poor" despite some recent improvements. Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said the report was designed to distract public opinion from human rights abuses in the United States, and showed Washington's continued hostility towards Iran. "American society is more than ever suffering from startling human rights abuses such as racism, xenophobia and the regular violation of the rights of children and women," he said in remarks broadcast on television.

Amendment lets president be party member

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir has signed amendments in the armed forces law, including new provision that allows a military supreme commander to be a member of a political party. All military individuals have until now been prohibited by law from any political party affiliation, but this provision has now been modified to exempt a military supreme commander from this ban, thus allowing General Bashir to continue as chairman of the National Congress Party.

Kenyan woman has twins in plane

NICOSIA (R) — A Kenyan woman went into premature labour and gave birth to twins in a plane flying over Cyprus on Sunday, authorities said. Grace Akosha, who was 30 weeks pregnant, gave birth to a boy and a girl on a Gulf Air flight from Birmingham, England, to Bahrain. A doctor on board the aircraft supervised the delivery while the pilot made an emergency landing at Cyprus' Larnaca Airport.

Yemeni publicly executed for murder

SANA (AFP) — A Yemeni man found guilty of murder was publicly executed Sunday in the southern province of Dhamar before a large crowd, the official news agency SABA said. Nine people have been executed so far this year in Yemen, according to an AFP count.

Plane taking Ocalan stopped in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A lawyer for Abdullah Ocalan said the Kurdish rebel leader believes that a plane taking him to Turkey following his capture by Turkish agents in Kenya made a stopover in Israel, Israel Radin reported Sunday. "Ocalan told me he believes that the plane taking him back to Turkey stopped a first time, possibly in Egypt, and then a second time in Israel," the radio quoted attorney Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu saying in an interview.

Saudi Arabia executes citizen for murder

RIYADH (R) — Saudi Arabia on Sunday executed a man convicted of stabbing to death another Saudi Arabian national in a dispute, the interior ministry said. A ministry statement read on state television said the man was put to death in the Holy City of Mecca after he had been convicted of killing his victim with a dagger. It said the death sentence was carried out after higher judicial bodies endorsed it and following a royal decree.

Probe begun after foetus found in jet

ROME (AP) — Italian authorities Sunday were trying to track down Egyptian passengers after a fetus was found in the airliner's toilet following its arrival in Rome. Italian news reports said the foetus was found by cleaning crew working to unclog a toilet aboard the jetliner, which had landed Saturday evening on a flight from Cairo. By the time the seven-month-old fetus was found, the flight's passengers had already left the airport, the reports said.

Probe begun after foetus found in jet

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Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

03:00 ... Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

18:35 ... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

20:45 ... Abu Dhabi, Tehran (RJ)

21:00 ... Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

21:00 ... Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

21:15 ... Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

21:20 ... Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights

04:10 ... London (BA)

08:20 ... Alexandria (BA)

09:30 ... Cairo (MS)

10:00 ... Khartoum (SD)

11:30 ... Sanaa (Y)

12:45 ... Kiev (U)

13:20 ... Bahrain (GF)

14:45 ... Doha (QR)

15:05 ... Vienna (OS)

15:25 ... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)

17:50 ... Istanbul (SD)

18:40 ... Beirut (ME)

20:05 ... Tel Aviv (LY)

20:30 ... Frankfurt, Damascus (LH)

01:25 ... Athens (OA)

02:00 ... Milan (AZ)

14:10 ... Bahrain (GF)

15:35 ... Doha (QR)

15:50 ... Vienna (OS)

16:30 ... Dubai (EK)

18:50 ... Khartoum (SD)

20:00 ... Beirut (ME)

20:50 ... Tel Aviv (LY)

02:45 ... Athens (OA)

03:00 ... Milan (AZ)

15:30 ... Vienna (OS)

16:30 ... Dubai (EK)

18:50 ... Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)

19:00 ... Gaza (arriving at QAIA)

20:00 ... Tel Aviv (LY)

20:50 ... Athens (OA)

03:00 ... Milan (AZ)

15:30 ... Vienna (OS)

16:30 ... Aqaba (from QAIA)

18:50 ... Tel Aviv (from QAIA)

20:00 ... Aqaba (from QAIA)

20:50 ... Tel Aviv (from QAIA)

21:00 ... Tel Aviv (from QAIA)

Home News

IAF to participate in municipal elections

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) on Sunday said it will take part in this summer's municipal elections, but warned the government against introducing any amendments to the current legislation with the objective of reducing the party's representation in city councils.

"We hope to hear from the government soon that [municipal] elections will be held on time and under the current law, although we have great reservations about it," said an IAF statement.

The IAF, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has long criticised the current legislation on municipal elections, especially provisions under which the mayor and half of the Amman Municipality Council's 40 members are appointed by the Council of Ministers.

"The current law reflects neither the level of democracy Jordanians aspire to nor their political maturity, because it has deprived Amman citizens of the right to elect their mayor and half their municipal council's members," the statement said.

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan declared last week that municipal elections will be held as scheduled, in July.

The IAF followed its mother organisation in the historic boycott of the November 1997 general elections — a move that many inside and outside the party have come to regret.

One IAF source told the *Jordan Times* yesterday that

'Ours, like any party, needs political participation in order not only to mobilise and increase its base, but also to assess its own performance'

— Opposition leader

The July elections could offer an opportunity for the party to strengthen its grassroots and test its following.

"Ours, like any party, needs political participation in order not only to mobilise and increase its base, but also to assess its own performance, to see what was done wrong and what was right," said one moderate leader, who in 1997 voiced his opposition to the boycott decision.

Although it remains Jordan's biggest party, the IAF is said to have lost some of its former iron grip over its traditional strongholds, namely the Palestinian refugee camps, densely populated urban suburbs, and other underprivileged areas.

Analysts have said a decrease in membership may have resulted from both a general apathy and disenchantment towards political parties and a more specific loss of exposure and influence in many public institutions due to the elections boycott.

In another statement released yesterday announcing the decisions of a Shura Council held on Friday, the IAF condemned yesterday's visit by Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of the Zionist entity.

The Shura, the policy-making body in Islamic organisations, urged the government "to stop martial practices and release all political prisoners."

It also demanded the application of "the infamous press law" endorsed last year and criticised at home and abroad for imposing severe restrictions to freedom of expression.

The statement emphasised the need to mend Arab ties and boost inter-Arab and Muslim cooperation. It also condemned the recent American and British attacks against Iraq.

Married couple admit guilt in five murder cases

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman Police Department has named two suspects in five murder cases unresolved since 1994-1995.

Police have identified Bilal Musa Qasem and his wife Suzan Ibrahim as suspects in the cases.

Department Director Ziyad Najdawi told a press conference in Amman that the man and his wife admitted to committing the five murders during police investigations into six other cases involving the same couple. He said the couple re-enacted the crimes for the police at their respective scenes.

Najdawi said that, during the interrogation of Bilal and Suzan about earlier crimes in which they were suspected to have been involved, the pair confessed to killing two men

and three women in Amman and Zarqa in the course of committing robberies. He said the couple robbed victims of their jewellery and cash after killing them.

He said after committing the five murders, the two suspects fled to Libya, but were extradited to Jordan in late 1998 after the police had gathered sufficient evidence about their involvement in the crimes.

Providing some details about the five murder cases, Najdawi said one of the murders was committed in January of 1994. The victim, 28-year-old schoolteacher Fatimah Yousef of Zarqa, was stabbed to death. Another second murder was committed in June 1994. The victim was a 54-year-old woman living in the Abdoun neighbourhood of

Amman. The third victim was Lina Mohammad Burqan, a resident of Irbid near Amman, who was murdered in October 1995. Omar Abu Khadidj's body was found in October 1995. The fifth victim was Najeh Khayat, whose body was found in his office near Al Hussein refugee camp in Amman in November 1995.

According to the police chief, all the murders had similar patterns. He said Suzan was a key element in these crimes. Her presence facilitated the suspects' entry into homes or other areas where the victims were killed, he said.

According to Najdawi, the other crimes in which the two were involved occurred between 1994 and 1998.

Boars go hog wild in Jordan Valley farms

They come in gangs to eat citrus fruits and leave behind the peel. They pull down fences with their massive weight, but farmers are unamused by their antics

By Dana Charkasi

DEIR ALLA — Scores of wild boars are invading farms in northern parts of the Jordan Valley close to the border with Israel, damaging agriculture produce and leaving behind distraught and helpless farmers.

"They appear at night and eat everything they can find," said farmer Mohammad Al Ghzawi, whose family owns many farms in the area hardest hit by the boars. They forage for everything from vegetables, fruits and grain to small reptiles found in the ground.

"Citrus fruits, especially clementines, are one of their favourite meals. After they finish devouring them, they leave the peel behind," he told the *Jordan Times*.

Apart from damaging the harvest, they wreak havoc on the land itself by trampling on it and uprooting the earth with their tusks when looking for feed. In many instances, they uproot young trees and destroy plastic green houses protecting crops from the elements.

"They come to eat in crowds and after they finish, they enjoy scratching their backs, destroying a dunum per head," Ghzawi lamented.

"Their massive weight, which can reach up to 150 kilograms per boar, works like a plough when they scour the ground with their tusks for crops, roots and

worms," said Shaher Al Sugur, another farmer whose land lies inside the belt.

The boars are trapped in a 100-kilometre long strip along the border with Israel in the west, guarded by a tangle of electric barbed wire fencing, and populated areas of the Jordan Valley in the east, preventing their migration in either direction. In some places, this patch of land measures only 500 metres in width.

Farmers, many of them already debt-ridden and facing drought conditions for two months now, said their plight is further aggravated by a general ban on shooting boars because of the area's proximity to Israel, with whom Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994.

"We, the Jordan Valley farmers, feel that authorities have forsaken us. Nobody cares about our problem with the wild boars," Sugur added. "The Ministry of Agriculture and the army should be cooperating in order to solve the issue."

Mustafa Abu Zeid, head of the Jordan Valley Agricultural Department, said he was sympathetic to their plight. But apart from permitting more hunting, he ruled out any effective solution.

The possibility of cordonning off the afflicted area with fences to hold back the boars would be too costly, he said.

"And the use of poison is not an alternative as the whole area is agricultural farm land," he added.



SMART BUT PESKY: Farmers complain that they are defenceless against the animals' appetites

The only alternative, he says, is to shoot them and allow in more licensed hunters with army permission.

The problem is further compounded by a daily curfew imposed on most residents and farmers working in the border strip — a security measure to prevent infiltration.

"Farmers working on land inside this security zone have to vacate by 4:00 p.m.," said Ghzawi. "So after 4:00 p.m., there is

nobody and nothing to scare [the animals] away."

Though boars are mostly found in the northern Jordan Valley near the Yarmouk River — the Kingdom's food basket — they are also present in the nearby hilly areas of Ajloun and Jerash.

However, farmers outside the zone face fewer restrictions in hunting the high-fertility boars, each female reproducing six to nine boars twice a year.

Hunters love to chase the

brown-haired grizzled boars, who pose a challenge with their massive physical strength, speed, and ferocity. Blackish or brown in colour, the animal stands up to 90 centimetres.

Except for old male boars, which live in solitude and are respectfully named "Methusaleh" by European hunters, wild boars live and forage in groups. The animals are swift, nocturnal, and omnivorous. They have an acute sense of smell and noise, and are considered extremely intelligent and shy.

Though normally unaggressive and shy, they can be dangerous when injured or when their offspring are in danger, characteristics that pose a danger to hunters and add yet a new dimension to solving the farmers' problem.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is responsible for granting hunting licences to individuals under tight restrictions, while the army grants permission for hunters who are recommended by the society.

However, the RSCN, which has up to 300 hunters licensed to shoot wild boars, said it allows all hunters to do so since the animals are not an endangered species and are not protected by restricted hunting seasons.

"We are allowing the hunting of wild boars all year round and there are no restrictions whatsoever," said Mahmoud Yassin, head of the RSCN Law Enforce-

ment Section.

"When farmers inform us that they have a boar problem, we may encourage them to hunt in these areas. We often turn a deaf ear when we hear that a farmer who is not a licensed hunter shoots a boar, because we realise the damage inflicted on farms," he said.

"But it's up to the army to grant them permissions for hunting boar in the Valley," explained Yassin.

In the absence of a coordinated strategy to fight boars, Abu Zeid and many farmers say that licensed hunters with army permission to hunt remain the sole solution.

However, several attempts to enlist the help of the army have yet to produce results, Abu Zeid said.

"I consider boars as thieves who steal crops and fruits worth JD5,000 to JD 6,000 a year," said Ghzawi, who says that the animals have even torn down a fence built around one of his family's farms.

The boars, he says, stand on their hind legs and pull the fence down with their massive weight or simply dig their way through from underneath.

"But I'm not allowed to defend myself or my property against their incursions," he complained.

Meanwhile, farmers in the northern Valley have resorted to "creative" strategies to scare away the pests. But they

acknowledged that their methods, including leaving radios blasting music at night, have not helped much.

"We've tried all kinds of equipment that could produce noise to keep these beasts away," Ghzawi said. "But all these methods have failed, since the animals seemed to have got used to the racket."

Sugur suggested setting up motion-activated noise alarm systems that go off when sensing nearby motion that would prod the boars to run away.

He also said Israel should be involved in the strategy.

"Our army should tackle the issue in cooperation with the Israeli side. Otherwise, we will never have a solution," he said.

Many believe Israel is not under pressure to help, because farmers on their side of the border do not suffer from the same problem since the animals are contained on the Jordanian side by the electronic fences along the border.

However, realities on the ground often change. Hunters claim that after the army grants permission to hunters, the areas in which they are allowed to hunt are often changed to restricted areas without prior notice.

Each party also lays the blame on another.

"The Ministry of Agriculture has no department or staff to deal with the issue of wild boars," said one official.

Woman admits to complicity in police hijacking

Qadi dismisses speculation that she received assistance from another party

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Interior Minister Nayef Qadi on Sunday said the sister of one of the two suspects involved in the killing of two policemen during a foiled police van hijacking last month was responsible for getting the gun used in the fatal incident to her brother.

Qadi, who was speaking at the Lower House ordinary session on Sunday, said Samas Jaghameen, 31, sister of Mohammed Jaghameen, one of the two suspects, has admitted bringing a seven-calibre gun concealed under her clothing to the State Security Court, where the suspects were being tried on

12 counts of murder in incidents last year in the Shmeisani and Rabia districts of Amman.

The sister, who lives in Irbid Governorate, has been formally charged as an accomplice to the crime of premeditated murder of security officers. Qadi said.

According to Qadi, the woman told authorities that her brother had urged her to get him the gun.

He said that Samas notified her brother that she would hide the gun inside the court's lavatory. Jaghameen took the gun from the lavatory and used it in the hijack attempt, Qadi said.

Qadi dismissed specula-

tions that the women had received assistance from another party. He said the van used to transport the prisoners from the court back to their prison was under "strict" security by police accompanying it.

Sergeants Mohammed Daifallah and Mahmoud Farahewi were killed and three other officers were injured when Jaghameen and his colleague opened fire on their police escorts on Feb. 17.

Jaghameen, who was injured, and Suleiman, who was killed in the incident, were among six suspects accused in the Rabia and Shmeisani murders. Two of the suspects were arrested and three were

killed in a raid carried out by the Special Forces on their hideout in Sahab in mid-1998.

If convicted of complicity in the incident, Samas could face a 15-year prison term with hard labour, a report in Al Dustour Arabic daily said.

Qadi said Samas gave a full confession to the public prosecutor.

Deputy Abdullah Akialeh requested further clarification on the incident and demanded to know whether foreign parties were involved in the hijacking attempt "despite all this strict security."

Meanwhile, the minister said that police were continuing efforts to identify

those responsible for the killing of a jewellery shop owner in Jabal Hussein on Saturday night.

The minister confirmed reports that the assailants stole nothing from the shop.

Qadi said an employee at the Israeli embassy on Wednesday was shot by one of the colleagues during training inside the embassy premises in Rabia neighbourhood.

He said Sork Gefen, 21, was sent to Israel on Friday upon a request from the Israeli government, which also dispatched a medical team to supervise the treatment of Gefen, a guard at the Israeli mission.

JTC gives telecoms another boost with introduction of ISDN services

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) yesterday began providing an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), allowing video-conferencing between Jordanians and their associates, families and friends in the Kingdom and abroad, a JTC official said Sunday.

The service will allow business executives to meet face-to-face with their associates around the world from the convenience of their offices," said the official who requested anonymity.

ISDN is rapidly growing in popularity as a superior alternative to plain old telephone lines (POTS) for digital communications (computer-to-computer, home-to-work, network-to-network, computers-to-Internet, etc.)

The JTC on Sunday placed an advertisement in local newspapers announcing the new service and included the fees for the service.

The JTC provides ISDN services plus a new phone line at JD350, while customers who already have telephone lines will pay JD225 for domestic telephones and JD100 for telephones used at commercial enterprises. Customers will pay a JD15 monthly fee.

"ISDN service is provided over the same copper wires used for a standard telephone service," said the official.

There is no difference in rates when customers use an ISDN line for voice calls, and they can stay with whatever carrier they currently use with ISDN service, said the ad.

As JTC is the only service provider, customers will have to purchase the ISDN terminal equipment from the market, he said.

all-digital ISDN line by pointing to the difference one can hear from a vinyl LP record versus a Compact Disc.

According to the official, the range of ISDN applications is constantly growing. JTC, through the ISDN, said it will introduce the following new services: high quality audio, enabling broadcasters to establish their own digital audio links without having to book expensive analogue music circuits in advance; data transfer,

enabling users to move anything from simple data to large video or image files; desktop conferencing, providing real time, on-line document discussion; and video conferencing and videotelephony, allowing distance learning, business meetings and access to remote expertise.

"The new service will allow Jordanian institutions and companies to attend international conferences while at home," added the official. "More customers can communicate amongst themselves using videotelephony."

Press photographers can instantly relay their pictures around the world by using ISDN, he added.

The official said a doctor from Amman will be able to examine a patient in Aqaba using this advanced technology.

Obasanjo slightly ahead in tight Nigerian elections

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Retired Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo took the lead Sunday over rival and former Finance Minister Olu Falae in Nigeria's presidential elections, with results reported from the federal capital and half of the states.

The independent national electoral commission said the partial results showed Obasanjo with about 53 per cent of the tabulated ballots — 7,123,232 votes — compared to Falae's 47 per cent — 6,071,064 votes.

Votes from the remaining 18 of 36 states in this country of 110 million had not yet been tabulated, commission officials said.

Obasanjo is seeking a comeback as an elected civilian president. He served as military ruler of Nigeria from 1976-79 and is the only one to have handed power over to an elected civilian — who was overthrown four years later in another military coup.

Falae told journalists late Saturday he would respect the outcome as long as the elections were fair, the radio station reported.

The successful candidate has to win a majority in the overall vote as well as at least 25 per cent of the vote in 24 of 36 states and the federal capital territory.

With 18 states reporting, Falae's All Peoples Party passed the 25 per cent threshold in 14 states, while Obasanjo's Peoples Democratic Party had secured at least 25 per cent in 16 states.

Some U.S. election observers expressed concern about irregularities in Saturday's vote, particularly in the states of Nigeria's oil-rich delta region, although it was unclear how serious the problems were, said Deanna Congoleo, spokesperson for the Atlanta-based Carter center.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter is leading a delegation of 60 observers from the centre and the National Democratic Institute.

Nigeria, an ethnically divided country with large oil reserves but extreme poverty, has been held in a military choke hold for most of its 39 years of inde-

pendence, its riches plundered by successive junta bosses.

The country's last attempt at democracy — presidential elections in 1993 won by businessman-turned-opposition-leader Moshood Abiola — was quashed by the military. Abiola later died in prison.

The ruthless five-year dictatorship of Gen. Sani Abacha ended last June with his sudden death, which set in motion the latest effort to transform Nigeria back into a democracy. His successor, Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, has repeatedly said he is determined to return a civilian to the presidency.

Abubakar said he would resign from the military May 29, the day he is to hand over power to the new civilian president.

"I've put in my best for my country, and I'm going home to rest," he told reporters Saturday.

Nigerian state radio said Sunday called the turnout "good" but did not give figures.

Electoral officials earlier said they expected no more than 40 million people to vote.

Visits by journalists and observers to voting stations in Lagos, Abuja, and the western city of Ibadan indicated significantly higher participation than in local, state and legislative elections last week.

Obasanjo is backed by a powerful political machine funded by the nation's rich and influential retired generals, most of them from northern Nigeria.

He and Falae, a Yale-trained economist, were both imprisoned during Abacha's brutal rule, which brought Nigeria's already crumbling infrastructure to the brink of collapse.

Falae is best known for backing a stringent and unpopular programme in the late 1980s to restructure Nigeria's economy that was pushed by international lending institutions but eventually abandoned by the military government.

Both men are Yorubas, but Obasanjo's military ties have made him unpopular among many of his own tribe, who have long chafed under army rule.

New 'Star Wars' star MacGregor shoots to stardom

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — His off-beat past casting may make him seem an odd choice for one of the most beloved characters of the epic "Star Wars" saga.

But Scottish heart-throb Ewan MacGregor is to play Obi-Wan Kenobi in the new "Star Wars" episode due out soon.

Originally played as an old man by Alec Guinness in the earlier "Star Wars" movies, Obi-Wan will be a young warrior in the upcoming "Star Wars, Episode I." (The earlier films were episodes four through six.)

MacGregor, expected to become a household name once the new "Star Wars" film comes out, previously appeared in such independent films as "The Pillow Book" and the drug-infested "Trainspotting."

Coincidentally, McGregor's uncle Dennis Lawson played Wedge in the first "Star Wars" trilogy; a little-known character who was a friend of Luke Skywalker's and became a cult favourite among fans.

At 28, McGregor is

whimsical about his anticipated superstardom, passing his time — after finishing shooting his Star Wars role for \$8 million — by riding his motorcycle around town and acting in a small play called "Little Malcolm and his Struggle against the Eunuch."

"I hope I'm not affected by it, and I hope I continue to do roles that will define me other than this one," he smiles. "It can't stop here."

The buzz about "Star Wars, Episode I" is slowly creeping into many conversations and can only grow louder in coming months. How great is it going to be?

Director Ron Howard — who is about to release his new movie "Ed TV" — got a glimpse of the new episode on a visit to Skywalker ranch.

"It's terrific. It's visually stunning and the characters are interesting. It takes the "Star Wars" series to another level," he says.

"When I saw it, it wasn't finished, so I can't wait to see the finished product. I was excited and enthralled by what I did see."



Slovak cosmonaut Ivan Bella (left) and Russia's Gennady Padalka, who ended a six-month mission on the ageing space station, smile after the landing. Two cosmonauts landed safely in the snowy steppes of Kazakhstan early Sunday after a successful flight back from Mir space station (Reuters photo)

2 crew members return safely from Mir

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian and Slovak returned safely from the Mir space station, landing their Soyuz capsule in the plains of northern Kazakhstan early Sunday morning.

Russian officials said the two men were taken directly to Star City, the

cosmonaut training base outside Moscow, where they were undergoing medical tests. The Interfax news agency reported. According to doctors, "both men are in a normal condition," the report said.

Their departure from the Mir leaves three men aboard who may be the last crew on the 13-year-old space station.

The Russian government says it can no longer afford the \$250 million required each year to keep the Mir going, and it may be abandoned if private funds cannot be found by August.

Russian space officials

vigorously defend the reliability of the Mir and say it could continue in orbit for several more years.

The station has been operating smoothly since a string of breakdowns in 1997. More than 100 men and women have lived on the Mir, which has circled earth about 75,000 times since it was launched Feb. 20, 1986.

The crew now on board consists of Russian commander Viktor Afanasyev and Frenchman Jean-Pierre Heignere, both of whom arrived last Monday, and Sergei Avdeyev, who has been on the Mir for six

months. All three are expected to remain until August.

The U.S. space agency NASA wants the Russians to discard the Mir so

Moscow can spend its limited resources on building an international space station, a project involving 16 countries.

The initial components of

the new station were put

into orbit at the end of

1998. But the Russians

have fallen behind in building

the key section that will

house the first crew, and no

people are expected to start

living on the station until

next year.

Hun Sen pledges to fight corruption after successful Tokyo trip

PHNOM PENH (AP) —

Prime Minister Hun Sen Sunday vowed to stamp out corruption and improve Cambodia's dilapidated infrastructure after securing \$470 million in fresh aid from world powers in Tokyo.

Hun Sen appeared triumphant as he fielded questions from a throng of reporters gathered to meet him on his return from a six-day trip to Japan where he won international aid to rebuild his country from decades of war.

He said he would pin his political future on his next two years in power, pledging to resign in 2001 if he could not stamp out corruption and "make a positive change."

This (trip to Japan) is a success for the new government and for the Cambodian people," he said.

"We hope we will make a positive change to our society with that money, and if within two years from 1999 to 2000 we are not able to make any changes, I will withdraw myself from the prime ministership in the first quarter of 2001.

"I wish to say in advance ... I will fight all the corrupt officials before I leave the position. I don't think they are more hardline than the Khmer Rouge," he said.

He said the international community could have acted "20 years ago" to end the killing in Cambodia but instead chose to "support the Khmer Rouge," referring to foreign backing of the guerrillas against the Vietnamese forces which occupied Cambodia from 1979 to 1989.

In Tokyo Friday Hun Sen warned a trial could frighten surrendered rebel forces back to the jungle

"killing fields" regime. Hun Sen said he was more interested in economic development.

"In the past few days I went to seek foreign aid for Cambodia, not to seek the trial of the Khmer Rouge," he said.

"We have dismantled their military and political organisation, so everyone should congratulate us," he said.

He said the international community could have acted "20 years ago" to end the killing in Cambodia but instead chose to "support the Khmer Rouge," referring to foreign backing of the guerrillas against the Vietnamese forces which occupied Cambodia from 1979 to 1989.

On international calls for

genocide trial of the surviving Khmer Rouge leaders

for their role in the

group's 1975 to 1979

where they would continue to undermine Cambodian stability.

The aid was promised

Friday by a World Bank-hosted consultative group meeting, which drew 17 nations, six international organisations and representatives from Cambodia.

In return for the aid, Hun

Sen agreed to hold quarterly dialogue with the donors to monitor progress in his promised economic reforms.

Japan contributed \$100

million, the largest single

aid package to Cambodia, he said.

The Japanese foreign

ministry also voiced its

readiness to resume low-

interest official loans to

Cambodia, which have

been suspended since

1968.

Japan breaks with taboo to perform organ transplant

TOKYO (AP) — Japan

broke one of its medical taboos Sunday by performing its first heart transplant operation in 31 years under a veil of secrecy designed to combat a media frenzy.

The surgery, on a man in his 40s at the Osaka university hospital, was part of Japan's first transplant of organs from a brain-dead donor after a law was passed 18 months ago allowing such operations.

Relatives of the donor, identified only as a victim of a massive stroke in her 40s, had protested that the saturation media coverage was akin to a "countdown in the dying process of a loved one."

In a statement, the family called on the media to refrain from interviewing or photographing them when they return home with the dead woman's body.

Health officials refused to give the identities of the donor or recipients.

Japanese media followed every step in the transplant saga after keeping vigil for three days at the Kochi Red Cross hospital, where the woman was found to be a

card-carrying member of a nationwide network of would-be organ donors.

Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said the operation would help Japan catch up with the rest of the world in organ transplants.

"I would like to join the nation in praying for successful transplant operations," he said.

A youth aged 18 in Sapporo received the heart from a 21-year-old man who had just drowned.

The recipient died 83 days later and surgeon Juro Wada was charged with murder amid suspicions the donor's brain death was not accurately confirmed. The charges were dropped two years later for lack of evidence.

Japan's first transplant of the pancreas and the kidneys from a brain-dead donor in 1984 also resulted in the death of the recipient a year later and a complaint against the surgeon.

Newspapers said the Sapporo case had made organ transplants taboo in

South Africa in 1967 and drugs invented in the 1980s minimised rejection of organs.

But Japanese doctors have shunned such operations, haunted by a scandal involving the country's first and only previous heart transplant in 1968.

A youth aged 18 in Sapporo received the heart from a 21-year-old man who had just drowned.

The recipient died 83 days later and surgeon Juro Wada was charged with murder amid suspicions the donor's brain death was not accurately confirmed. The charges were dropped two years later for lack of evidence.

Japanese are also deeply divided on whether to donate their organs for transplant at the stage of brain death.

According to an official poll of 3,000 people, 37.6 per cent were against giving away their organs when brain death is confirmed, while 31.6 per cent said they were in favour.

The poll, published by the prime minister's office Saturday, also showed that 35.7 per cent would donate organs when their hearts stopped beating while 33.5 per cent said they would refuse to do so at all.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.K.'s Princess Anne may be 'queen of Scots'

LONDON (R) — Princess Anne is to make Edinburgh her official home in a concerted bid by Britain's royal family to dampen Scottish demands for independence, the Sunday Times reported. The paper said Queen Elizabeth's daughter would effectively become princess regent in Scotland, holding court at the palace of Holyroodhouse, receiving foreign leaders and conferring honours on behalf of her mother. The move is aimed at raising the royal family's profile in Scotland and fulfilling the queen's desire to keep her kingdom united at a time of devolution, it said. Opinion polls show the ruling Labour Party is just ahead of the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP), two and a half months before the election of a new Scottish parliament which will take control of much of Scotland's internal affairs.

Pope urges all countries to sign anti-mine treaty

VATICAN CITY (R) — Pope John Paul Sunday said an anti-landmine convention about to come into force marked a "triumph of the culture of life over the culture of death" and urged all countries to sign it without delay. An international treaty banning the use, production and storage of anti-personnel landmines signed by some 130 countries in Ottawa in December 1997 takes effect on March 1. The Pope noted in his weekly address. "Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go before the world is freed of these terrible and deceitful devices," the Pontiff told pilgrims in St. Peter's Square. "I pray to God to give all people the courage to make peace, so that the countries that have not yet signed this important instrument of international humanitarian law do so without delay, and so that they persevere with the work of clearing land mines and rehabilitating the wounded," he said. The Ottawa Treaty followed years of campaigning to ban landmines that kill or maim thousands of people each year. The late Princess Diana was a prominent anti-mine campaigner. Russia, the United States, China and Ukraine did not sign the Ottawa treaty, though Ukraine last month said it hoped to sign by March and planned to destroy Soviet-era mine arsenals.

South African army accused of Internet blunder

JOHANNESBURG (R) — The South African parliament has accused the military of a serious breach of security by posting a highly damning internal report on the Internet, a newspaper reported Sunday. The Sunday Independent said the report, posted on the Internet during February, details decay and declining morale in all sections of the military and a shortage of



Pauline Hanson, leader of her One Nation Party with fellow party director David Oldfield on her left, is congratulated by one of supporters outside the party's annual general meeting in Sydney. The media had been denied access to the controversial party's AGM at the Rooty Hill Returned Services League club in Sydney's western suburbs, where she and hundreds of her party's members gave her a rousing show of support after weeks of speculation she may have been replaced as leader (Reuters photo)

Australian anti-immigrant party keeps leader

SYDNEY (R) — Australian anti-immigrant politician Pauline Hanson retained her leadership of the controversial One Nation party Sunday despite last year's disastrous election showing and a wave of recent defections.

Hanson, 44, and two long-standing lieutenants, David Oldfield and David Ettridge, were unanimously reelected at the party's annual general meeting, Oldfield told reporters.

"We are strong, we are united and we have a long way to go," Hanson said after emerging from the 10-hour meeting, held at a casino run by the Retired Servicemen's League in the Sydney suburb of Rooty Hill.

But she has managed to

irk an even greater number of citizens in Australia, a nation still coming to grips with the harsh treatment of Aboriginals over the last two centuries.

Hanson has been outspoken against compensation paid to Aboriginal tribes for land the government has acknowledged may have been stolen from them. In a 1997 book, "Pauline Hanson — The Truth", she accused some Aboriginal tribes of cannibalism during the past 40,000 years.

Political foes believe Hanson's outspoken opposition to Australian immigration policy threatens trade with neighbouring countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

After a disastrous show-

ing in last October's federal and state elections, when Hanson lost her upper house seat and only one party member reached the senate, local One Nation leaders started to leave, prompting newspaper articles that the party was finished.

Things got worse for One Nation a month after the election when one Queensland MP quit and checked into a mental hospital, citing stress and health problems.

Then earlier this month, four more Queensland MPs quit and a fifth was sacked for disloyalty.

However, a recharged Hanson, flanked by hundreds of supporters Sunday, vowed to lead her party into the future with pride.

Editors of Arab papers praise Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR — Editors of major Arab newspapers have described Dr. Mahathir Mohamad as a role model for Muslim leaders.

They are amazed by the prime minister's vociferous speeches at international forums championing the cause of the Third World and the premier's leadership which has led to Malaysia's impressive economic growth and development.

They also see Mahathir as a leading Muslim thinker who can interpret the demands of Islam in a practical manner and one who has used it as a key to Malaysia's success.

They expressed these views personally at a two-hour meeting between Mahathir and seven editors, including those from Egypt and Jordan, at his office here yesterday.

Publisher of the Sudanese newspaper Al-Ray Al-Naam, Mahgoub Mohamed El-Hassan Erwa described Mahathir as a statesman and a leading Muslim thinker who could be a role model for other Muslim leaders. He said the secret of

Malaysia's economic success and ability to maintain stability and harmony among the various races should be shared with the Arab nations which were continually being pitted against each other by the West such as the dispute between Sudan and Egypt.

The editor of Libyan newspaper Al-Zahar Al-Akhbar, Dr. Abdul Kadir Ibrahim Al-Hafshi, was deeply attracted to Malaysia's five-year development plans which he described as key to the country's continued success.

"Muslim countries can learn much from Malaysia and emulate her approach and policies especially in eliminating poverty," he said.

Mahathir modestly said that he had no intention of "teaching" any other country but expressed Malaysia's willingness to share her knowledge and experience.

Senior economic writer for The News of Pakistan, Kiani Khaleeq Ahmad Khan said he was attracted to Mahathir's ideas on the way out of the eco-

nomic crisis.

He was also impressed with

Mahathir's views on Pakistan, which the prime minister had described as a very rich Muslim country which had the potential to emerge as a very strong Muslim Nation if she could overcome her internal problems.

Reprinted from the Sun of Kuala Lumpur

Mahathir felt that the economic sanctions imposed on Pakistan were unfair as there was no economic and trade embargo on Israel which had nuclear weapons too.

The centre also said police

detained two members of the China Democracy Party, the banned group at the centre of last year's crackdown. Wu

around midnight after assurances the Serbs would be found.

Also Sunday, the Albanian-run Kosovo Information Centre claimed Serb forces were firing heavy artillery near Pustenik in the separatist province's southeastern border with Macedonia, sending civilians fleeing. The report could not immediately be confirmed.

With Kosovo's informal ceasefire increasingly in danger of collapse, monitors were on the alert for new outbreaks of violence in two other volatile areas.

In northern Kosovo, the Albanian-run Kosovo Information Centre reported shooting Sunday in the Vucitrn area, 30 kilometres northwest of Pristina, where violence has intensified over the past week. Yugoslav army troops reportedly fired on rebel positions in at least five villages in the area.

And in the rebels' heartland,

region, ethnic Albanians planned a memorial service to mark the first anniversary of the bloody crackdown that triggered their insurrection.

Fighting began in earnest in Kosovo on Feb. 28, 1998, when Serb police launched attacks around the village of cirez in retaliation for the deaths of two policemen slain by the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army.

Next week marks the anniversary of the March 6 slaying of KLA figure Adem Jashari, killed by police along with nearly 30 of his relatives in the town of Prekaz.

International monitors fear the two anniversaries, falling in the middle of the three-week suspension in peace talks in France, could raise tensions and trigger new fighting that could scuttle efforts to end the conflict.

Saturday, the U.S. head of the monitors, William Walker, appealed to both sides to refrain from violence before the sec-

ond round of peace talks.

"Those with weapons must stop shooting and cease provocative actions," Walker said. "Civilians, who form the majority of casualties, must speak out in support of a peaceful solution."

OSCE peace verifiers also were investigating the killing Saturday of a Serb policeman in Vaganica, about 20 kilometres west of Pristina on the road to Pec. After they visited the village Saturday, accompanied by Serb police, rebels reportedly opened fire on the police.

More than 2,000 people died and 300,000 others — mostly ethnic Albanians — have been displaced since Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic launched his crackdown last year against separatists.

About 90 per cent of the population is ethnic Albanian and most favour independence in Kosovo, a province of the Serb Republic that dominates Yugoslavia.

Albright lands in China as crackdown goes on

BEIJING (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in China Sunday amid reports of fresh detentions of dissidents which ensured that human rights would top a list of thorny disputes ranging from missiles to Macedonia.

As Albright arrived in Beijing hot on the heels of an annual State Department World Human Rights Report which criticised China authorities continued the mop-up of dissent that drew the U.S. condemnation, a Hong Kong-based rights group said.

Peng Ming, who led a reform think tank at the centre of last year's short-lived flowering of political openness dubbed "Beijing spring", was given an 18-month labour camp sentence on charges of hiring a prostitute in 1998, with severe limits on freedom of expression and association.

The case of Peng, who was arrested on Jan. 25 and whose sentence without trial was revealed to his wife Friday, was "definitely a set-up", the centre said. It warned police would employ women to entrap dozens more pro-democracy intellectuals.

The centre also said police

Yilong of Hangzhou, a founding party member, and Lu Xinhua of Wuhan, were taken away at the weekend.

The detentions capped a week in which Washington and Beijing squared off on a range of unrelated issues that highlighted the complexity of a relationship both have optimistically termed a "strategic partnership".

Spats over human rights, satellite sales and defence policy show the feel-good U.S.-China summit meetings of 1997-98 have not led to a meeting of minds.

Albright opens two days of talks Monday in the wake of the release of the human rights report, which said China's record deteriorated sharply in 1998, with severe limits on freedom of expression and association.

China sharply denounced the report whose critical tone was long expected after last year's detention of dozens of China Democracy Party activists and harsh sentences in closed trials for three party founders.

The state department blamed the crackdown on Beijing's fear of unrest and said it overshadowed China's October signature of the U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue issued a statement expressing "serious displeasure and resolute opposition" to the report, issued a day after the U.S. Senate voted 99-0 to urge the White House to promote an anti-China resolution when the U.N. Human rights commission meets in Geneva in March.

Thursday, Beijing voiced "strong resentment" at the Clinton administration's veto of the sale of \$450 million worth of telecommunications satellites to China on the grounds the Chinese military was part of the buying consortium.

U.S. security concerns cited for stopping the sale were "groundless" and it would hurt the bilateral economic relationship, Zhang said.

Business ties, long the bright spot of a relationship clouded by political disputes, have been strained over the past year by U.S. complaints about China's \$57 billion trade surplus, new Chinese trade barriers and the lack of progress on Beijing's 13-year-old bid to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Albright was expected to discuss China's WTO entry in a push for a breakthrough before Premier Zhu Rongji visits Washington in April. The hard WTO negotiating, however, will

be left to U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky, set to visit Beijing just as Albright winds down her March 1-2 trip.

As if the perennial disputes were not enough, Albright will also face a grilling by Chinese counterpart Tang Jiuxuan over a proposed U.S. missile defence system to protect Japan and South Korea that Beijing's rival Taiwan also wishes to join.

China has denounced the missile defence shield and the London-based Financial Times said last week China made a veiled threat to transfer missile technology to third countries if Washington established such a missile umbrella.

A Chinese about-face on missile proliferation would reverse one of the relatively few successes the Clinton administration has to show from its policy of strategic dialogue with China.

Last week also saw a Chinese veto of an extension for the U.N. peacekeeping force in Macedonia in retaliation for the Balkan state's recognition of Taiwan.

The United States said it regretted the Chinese decision, which adds to uncertainty surrounding peace talks in nearby Kosovo and undermines an operation Washington sees as a valuable contribution to stability in southeastern Europe.

2 killed, 1 missing after ship rolls in rough seas

TOKYO (AP) — Two crew members died and another was missing Sunday after a Panamanian cargo ship lurched in rough seas south of Japan, the Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) said.

Meanwhile, a Honduran freighter ran aground off northern Japan because of strong winds Sunday, though its eight crew members escaped unharmed, the agency said.

The Panamanian-registered Andhika Adirata, a 6,788-tonne cargo ship, was carrying a crew of 19 Indonesians and one Myanmarese when it lurched in strong winds Saturday night in the south east China Sea. Seventeen crew members were rescued by a coast guard boat; foreign ships sailing nearby and helicopters from Taiwan, said Yusuke Ono, an MSA official.

The names and nationalities of the dead and missing crew members were not known immediately, Ono said.

The trouble occurred after engine trouble left the Andhika Adirata drifting in the sea about 83 kilometres southwest of Yonaguni island on the southern tip of the Japanese archipelago, the official said.

The Andhika Adirata, carrying 3,000 tonnes of steel coil, was heading for Taiwan from Shanghai via Japan's Ishigaki island when the accident occurred, Ono said.

The ship's cargo may have shifted but there was no immediate danger of it sinking, he said.

The Andhika Adirata is owned by Alkali Shipping Co. of Singapore, the official said.

Meanwhile, the 1,213-tonne Honduran freighter Collins ran aground off Amami, northern Japan, as the captain was seeking shelter from strong winds, the MSA said in a statement.

The crew — two South Koreans, three Chinese and three Myanmarese — were unharmed, the MSA said.

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Opinion & Analysis

Jordan Times, Monday, March 1, 1999

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Blame enough to go around

AFTER YESTERDAY'S talks with Jordanian officials, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered some very promising words about the future of peace in the region.

"We have no doubt that we should be able to move the peace process forward for the conclusion of the Wye River accords and the negotiation and conclusion of a permanent peace settlement," he said. "We hope [this will be the case] also with Syria and Lebanon as well. These are our objectives."

He could have fooled us.

Those words were spoken just hours before Israel launched a massive attack on Lebanon in retaliation for the alleged Hezbollah bombing of a military convoy in South Lebanon that killed a senior military officer and three other Israelis.

The blame of course, lies with the Syrians, the Lebanese, the Iranians and the Palestinians, according to Israel, which appears to absolve itself of responsibility in occupying territory that does not belong to it and obstructing the daily lives of Lebanese citizens.

We certainly do not condone any form of violence, but we do understand and support the (internationally recognised) legitimate rights of south Lebanese citizens to live free of occupation, and surely the responsibility for this gross disrespect for all international law and convention does lay with Israel.

It seems that Israel wants every other regional party to accept the full blame for messes that are partly of her own making without having to own up to her own responsibility in fomenting a just and lasting peace in the region.

Netanyahu was also quick to blame the Palestinians alone for lack of progress in implementing the Wye River agreement. The Palestinian record speaks for itself, and is endorsed by the U.S. administration — the honest broker of peace. Although the Palestinians have not achieved 100 per cent implementation, we can say that Israel has in fact refused to live up to any of its own commitments. Incredibly, Netanyahu has implicated the Palestinians in Israel's own failure to do so.

The irony of both situations is truly tragic.

We would like to suggest to Israel, first and foremost, that she cannot expect to attain peace while waging war, which time and again has proven fruitless in Lebanon. Maybe the solution to attaining peace with that country and its patron (and sparing both Arab and Israeli lives) is to try the last remaining solution: full and unconditional withdrawal for which Israel bears responsibility.

As far as the Palestinians are concerned, it would be a measure of Israel's integrity if it did an about face, tried a little reciprocity on for size, accepted some of the blame for the failure on the Palestinian track and implemented some of its own commitments.

At the very least, Israel could once and for all concede that there is enough blame for all in the region to share concerning our current state of affairs.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'y's Tareq Masarweh commented on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statements regarding Jordanian-Iraqi relations. Masarweh said such a statement reflects a typical Israeli pattern of thinking, especially in times of elections. He argued that Netanyahu knows that at present, Iraq is unable to engage in any war, and the prime minister should realise that. Masarweh added that Israel was also the only party to violate the peace treaty with Jordan, with the assault on Mish' al in Amman. He wondered what was behind Netanyahu's remarks about Jordan siding with Iraq in 1991, and whether it will take the same position in case Israel gets attacked. Jordan is not concerned with the prime minister's version of security, and if he wants Israel to be a part of the region, he must take other countries' security into consideration. Even with U.S. support, Netanyahu will not be able to "cancel" the people of the region, said Masarweh.

Al Dustour's editorial said the visit of senior Palestinian officials to Jordan and their discussions with the Kingdom's leadership prove how strong and important the two countries' relations are. The visits' importance increases with the continuing efforts and contacts to get rid of obstacles facing the Palestinian side in the peace process as a result of Netanyahu's policies, added the editorial. However, said the newspaper, it is obvious that Netanyahu's "narrow" election prospects were the main reason behind aborting such well-intentioned diplomatic efforts. It seems that election "fever," which is getting stronger in Israel, has recently forced the prime minister to cast doubt on Jordan's peaceful intentions, which were established under His Majesty King Hussein's leadership. The editorial said that while people are very satisfied about Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation, coordination and deliberation, they are worried about Netanyahu's political games with both countries, ignoring all signed agreements.

Which day for the two-day weekend?

Economic Review



Dr. Yusuf Mansur

NOW THAT the two-day weekend seems like a certainty, it is critical to pick the extra day of the week. Will it be Thursday or Saturday? Rumour has it that Thursday is the choice additional weekend day for the public sector and Saturday is the day for banks.

Dividing the labour market among two weekends is a market distorting approach whose ramifications should be carefully studied.

Any analysis of this type of problem must first look at labour's incentives in the context of the demand for leisure, which, like the demand for all goods, must depend on the opportunity cost (cost of work foregone by the worker — hourly wage rate), the worker's level of wealth (non-wage income), and the worker's preferences (like or dislike for the work). In addition, one must eval-

uate if any extra benefits would arise from having the Thursday-Friday weekend instead of Friday-Saturday.

While the opportunity cost may be the same, all workers would, on the basis of opportunity cost alone, be indifferent to the choice of day — as long as they get two days a week their opportunity cost is the same. Furthermore, since the work hours of the public sector would be slightly increased in either case and the banking sector will offer its services for two extra hours beyond the work hours of government, then there is no need to have a day in the week for conducting banking services. Plus, with the advent of Internet banking such a reason would be completely irrelevant in the near future.

On the other hand, workers

whose incomes are high and have spouses that work in the banking sector may value having the same weekend as their spouses and thus would be hurt by having a Thursday off while the rest of the family is off on Saturday. In other words, those workers who value their leisure time highly because they are wealthy, would be most adversely affected if they cannot spend the whole weekend with their children and spouse. This layer of society is the one whose leisure time would lead to greater internal tourism, more spending to fuel the economy and less unemployment. However, if they are unable to secure the whole family for a two-day weekend they may opt to switch employment or go unemployed which would increase unemployment.

As for preferences, both the

and universities have Thursday and Friday off with no religious basis or even necessity. Therefore, the worker is indifferent between Thursday and Saturday on the basis of pure preference. Any dislike of Saturday as the second day of the weekend should therefore be minor.

Evidently, the choice day should be Saturday. The first and last components of the traditional demand for leisure are the same for all layers of society, with the only difference being for those that are wealthier than others. Choosing Thursday for one group and Saturday for another would only help create disgruntled workers and attract whole households away from the public sector to the banking sector or the reverse. The pressure on either sector would be artificial and unnecessary.

Birth of a buzzword

The father of 'globality' explains what it means and why the world needs it

By Daniel Yergin

ARE YOU sure you want to do this?" asked a friend. He was looking through the manuscript of "The Commanding Heights," the book I co-authored with Joseph Stanislaw. His eye had been stopped by the word "globality." He went to his dictionary. It wasn't there.

Still, my answer to his question was "yes." We weren't consciously trying to coin a new management-speak buzzword. Rather, we wanted to find some respite from a growing dissatisfaction with the word "globalisation." Minted not much more than a decade ago, globalisation has become the inescapable and admittedly useful axiom of the international economy, the poster word of the post-communist world. But as with all words, it has its limits. It defines a process — the internationalisation of economic activities — that is crucial to today's business strategies. We were trying to convey something else, something larger than business and economics, though encompassing both: something pointed more towards the new century. Not a process, but the results of a process: a place, a condition, the situation that comes afterward.

Globality's profile was raised some by the title of an article I wrote for NEWSWEEK, "The Age of Globality." Still, the globality buzz was low-key — until just a few weeks ago, I rolled into the Swiss ski village of Davos for the 29th annual World Economic Forum — the epicentre of the world's intellectual capital market — and discovered that the theme of this year's talkathon was "Responsible Globality." As Prof. Klaus Schwab, founder of the WEF, told The Wall Street Journal: "We wanted to look beyond the economic dimensions of what is happening... It is a globality." The word seemed to fall off the lips of Davos panelists with an ease that suggested years of familiar-

ity. "Globality is here to stay," said U.S. Sen. John Kerry. And so, it seems, is the word. Bill Gates told a Davos session that he would have globality added to Microsoft's dictionary — much appreciated, as the spell check on my computer would then stop underlining it as an error.

So, what is globality? It is the 24-hour interconnected, hyperactive, sleep-deprived, e-mail-fuelled world. It is symbolised by Amazon.com, which sold its first book less than four years ago and now has 6.2 million customers. It is a world where governments have less leverage over their own economies. And where companies really do operate on a global basis — as Hewlett-Packard's CEO Lewis Platt says, in "a seven-day, 24-hour work-week where things are changing very rapidly." Non-governmental organisations also increasingly project their influence globally. E-commerce straddles borders and ignores tax collectors. Esperanto is not going to make a comeback, but common vocabularies are adopted by increasing numbers of people around the world — whether in software and operating systems or one's daily newsfeed.

Three forces are interacting to create this new globality. The first is a move away from counting on governments to manage economies and towards a much greater confidence in the ability of markets to function fairly and deliver the goods. This translates into deregulation and privatisation. Government gets out of business ownership, and out of the business of sheltering companies and markets from international competition.

The second spur to globality: borders are eroding as individual national economies are integrated. Think of the European Central Bank and the World Trade Organisation. The rapid growth of trade, investment and capital markets is also tying countries together. International brands beat out national champions. And third, add to all this the relentless force of technology, which provides the working foundation for globality. Cheap commun-

ications and information technology are fashioning a woven world, a global community — or, more precisely, a multitude of global communities. It's hard not to stay in touch — or get in touch.

Globality helps to explain the ceaseless wave of big mergers blurring national identities. Opportunities now exist that would have been unthinkable — or politically impossible — a few years ago. The ever more intense cross-border competition seems to require a new scale and broader capabilities, while shareholders increasingly demand high-calibre financial performance. Globality has some very nice features — such as higher incomes, wider choice and "anything.com." It also has some very unappealing aspects, such as the financial contagion that has swept around the world.

The heart of this year's Davos, at least for me, lay in its use of the word "responsible." Taking globally as given, it asked, "What kind of globality?" That question underlies debates about everything from what to do about the tidal flows of capital, to the environment, to social justice and the reform of the welfare state, to the power and magic of the media. What will be the rules of this new reality? How will the world manage itself? What happens to culture and national identity? How will this affect the billions of the world's poor? Inherent in all these questions is the underlying issue of legitimacy and acceptability. One sort of globality or another is inevitable. It will increasingly affect the lives of an ever-growing number of people. Its workings can bring many benefits and opportunities. It can also generate much disruption and discord.

Globality is not necessarily the most beautiful word, not even when set amid the snow and splendour of the Swiss Alps. But it has two things going for it: it captures a new reality, and its useful. Any day now, it'll show up in a dictionary. You read it here first.

— Newsweek

Letters to the editor

The other side of the story

Why should anyone trust Iraq?

I HAVE been reading with great interest and sometimes, I am sorry to say, with wonder, the editorials and compilations recently published on Kurdish terrorist activities in Turkey, Turkish government's possible approaches and its backlash described to be fantastic. I am certainly well aware of the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism; however, this time it has gone far beyond putting Turkey on trial (as Dr. Musa Keilani did) for its approach to the matter. Therefore, I felt myself forced to give the esteemed Jordanian public opinion a chance for a better understanding of the basic facts on the issue through this humble contribution.

There are about eight million Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin in Turkey, among a total population of approximately 65 million, the vast majority of whom live in the western parts of the country, rather than in the southeastern parts, which some Jordanian newspapers label "Kurdistan" and where for the most part, the PKK terrorist activities take place. There are more citizens of Kurdish origin living in Istanbul than in the southeastern part of the country. In the Turkish Parliament, there are close to two hundred elected deputies of Kurdish origin out of a total of 550, and the speaker is one. As will be noticed, Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin in parliament, as compared to their relative size in the population at large (1/12), has a much higher proportion (1/3).

Since the parliamentarians are elected by universal suffrage by the entire eligible Turkish constituents and represent, not merely their own constituencies, but the nation as a whole, the greater proportion of deputies of Kurdish origin in the parliament underscores two facts: One is that there is no discrimination against their ethnic origin and the other is that they have full and equal participation in the administration and the destiny of the country. Therefore, appeals for a political solution through negotiations for our citizens of Kurdish origins is tantamount to nothing less than asking us either to treat them as second-class citizens or to secede Turkish land to terrorism. There are no restrictions on citizens of Turkish or Kurdish origin on how to ethically define themselves or what language they speak. They can feel themselves whatever they may feel to be. No group of people need to be autonomous for those purposes.

The issue in Turkey is not, as some have put it, a Kurdish problem, nor is it about Kurdish nationalism. It is, at its core, separatist terrorism in the guise of a struggle for political and cultural rights conducted by a very small proportion of Kurds. Therefore, it is treated as such to protect Turkey's integrity. This land has been moulded with our blood into a country for the past thousand years and no one should entertain any ideas or hopes to the contrary. Citizens of Kurdish origin also shed their blood with their Turkish compatriots to establish the Turkish Republic. They have equal rights in the republic as their Turkish compatriots, and as such they do not deserve to be second class citizens nor to be a minority in a country where they have an equal share.

The country is one with its citizens and territory and we do not maintain the strongest army in Europe for anything else. No one should fall into the anachronism of pretending to live in the early part of this century, when borders were drawn in various distant capitals and hideouts.

Ocalan is the leader of a separatist terrorism organisation (PKK), and he shall be treated as such in the independent Turkish courts. He is responsible for the mass murder of thousands of our citizens of Kurdish origin, children, women and the elderly, in his bid to force their villages to join his vicious forces.

Let this be a lesson to all those who have doubted the determination or resolve of the Turkish nation; to those who for years have protected or condoned the atrocities or who have prevented their own justice carrying out their functions, either in vain hope and self-serving interests or out of fear of retribution by the PKK.

We expect those governments, institutions, politicians as well as opinion leaders to refrain from saying amen to an impossible prayer or wish, but also to join the right path towards a decent world.

His Excellency Tuncer Topuz
Ambassador of Turkey
Embassy of Turkey
Amman

I WOULD like to take exception to your editorial yesterday ("Playing their cards right," JT Feb. 28) in which you advise the governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to take up Baghdad's offer of unconditional dialogue "in order to examine the extent of the sincerity of the Iraqi regime."

In the first place, why are you presuming to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) since it is the stated policy of the Jordanian and other governments not to interfere with the internal affairs of another country.

Secondly, how many more proofs of Iraq's insincerity are needed before everyone is convinced that this regime will continue to lie and deceive as long as it is in power. The latest laughable example was when Tareq Aziz was in Ankara and the government in Baghdad issued a threat to bomb the Incirlik air-base in Turkey. When questioned about it, he (Aziz) denied any such intention!

Finally, why is it assumed that if this regime falls Iraq will be divided? Why not consider the more realistic position that this regime, by hanging on to power at all costs and by all means, is causing the division of Iraq. Already the north is functioning (successfully) as a separate entity while the situation in the south is chaos: government oppression during the day and lawlessness during the night. At any moment, a rebellion or insurrection may break out causing further division and suffering.

It would be wise to calculate the amount of damage this regime has done to its people, the people of Kuwait and the rest of the Arab and Muslim countries before making any statements about their "sincerity."

M. Tareq,
P.O. Box 941054
Amman

Letters of condolence

I WOULD like to convey my deepest condolences to the entire Royal family and the Jordanian people for the loss of a great world leader, late King Hussein.

Years ago, my father had the privilege to be one of the late King's Royal security officers. When I was a little girl, I remember my father telling me many interesting stories about the King and his "down to earth" personality.

May God bless his soul.

Ameena Kamal Shurdum
Dallas, Texas
U.S.

I WISH to offer my deepest sympathy to Jordan and her people on the death of Hussein Ben Talal. His Majesty was a great man and inspirational leader who brought Jordan through some terrible times, and has shaped a nation of which he and all Jordanians can be proud.

May God grant Hussein's courage to his people; his wisdom to his son; and his example to the world.
Where be is, there will Paradise be.

Ken Robertson
Scarborough
Western Australia

Waleed
M. Sadi
Footnote

THE U.S. State Department's annual human rights report for 1998 described Jordan's human rights record for that year as "uneven." The report cited many shortcomings and outright violations of basic human rights in the Kingdom's policies and practices ranging from prolonged detention without charge, lack of due process, harassment of members of political opposition parties and significant restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly and association. The report also condemned widespread institutional and societal discrimination against women, the lenient treatment of men convicted of committing so-called "honour crimes," and lack of effective protection of migrant workers especially domestic servants. The report also claims that wrongful deaths of persons in custody occurred in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

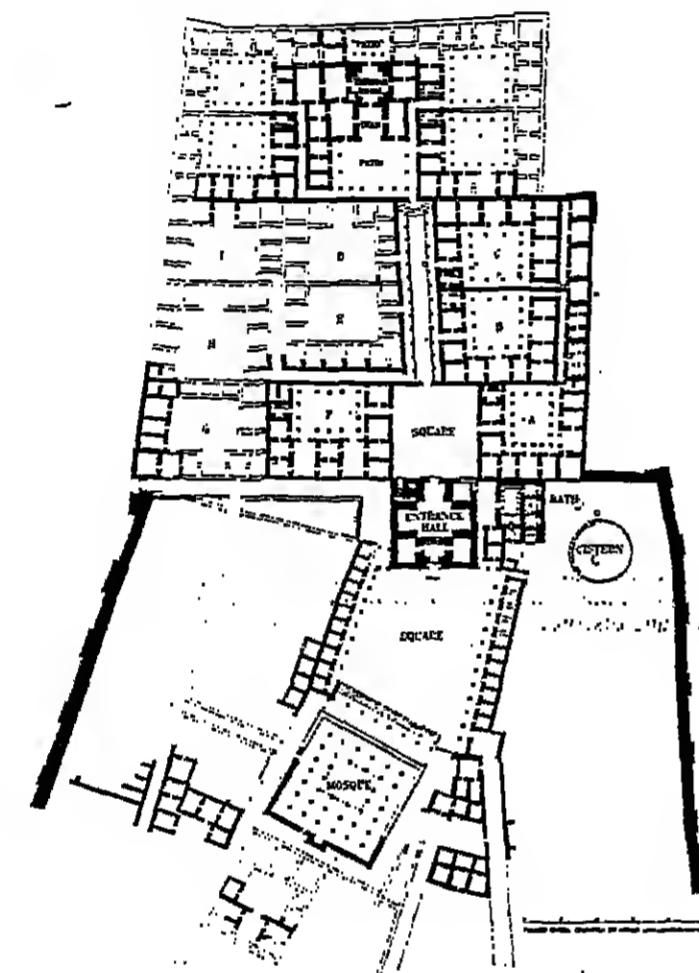
What is perplexing in this context is the widespread publicity given to the U.S. annual human rights

Spanish-Jordanian team uncovers Amman Citadel's Umayyad congregational mosque, novel urban plan

AFTER TWO years of excavations and architectural analyses, a Spanish-led team has uncovered the large congregational mosque and other public structures that formed the core of Umayyad era urbanism on the Citadel of Amman. Some of the innovations that were started near the Citadel of Amman — and that have now been firmly documented — later spread to influence the concept and design of cities in North Africa and Islamic Spain.

The exciting discoveries at the Citadel show that the heart of its early Islamic city comprised a large public square that was flanked by the main congregational mosque to the south, the domed audience hall of the Umayyad palace to the north, and two rows of shops forming a souq to the east and west. This great square was also the central point at which all the main roads on the Citadel converged, according to project director Ignacio Arce, a Spanish architect-archaeologist who has worked in Jordan for the past four years and whose research has led to these discoveries.

"The great square is the main social and urban link between the two parts of the Citadel that represented secular and religious power, symbolised by the palace and the mosque, both embraced by the market porticos," he said in a recent interview.



A plan of the structures of the Upper Terrace of the Citadel in early 1998. The mosque and souq/plaza area is in the bottom half of the plan, the audience hall (entrance hall) is in the center, and the royal palace or administrative complex is at the top (plan by Ignacio Arce, Spanish Archaeological Mission).

He said the walled town on the summit of the Citadel probably housed an urban elite, while the majority of the population continued to live in the city below the Citadel (around the area of the Roman theatre and Forum). He believes that three perimeter gates gave onto three roads within the hill-top town, and the roads all led into the central square/souq that "effectively organised the basic features of the urban space in the Umayyad period." The three streets are all visible now, after the excavations. One from the south-east leads past the large Byzantine church to the square; the two others lead from the south-west (west of the mosque) towards the square and mosque and from the square towards a door in the west wall of the Citadel.

The large square/souq was the pivot of the Umayyad town on the Citadel, and is situated almost exactly at the centre of the upper terrace of the Citadel (the lower terrace stretches towards the east beyond the standing Temple of Hercules, and is largely unexcavated). It has an irregular trapezoidal shape because it had to be designed within some existing structures from the Roman and Byzantine periods, such as the now domed audience hall to the north, and the position of the new mosque, with its shifted orientation towards Mecca, from the

south.

The mosque is located in the most important spot around the square, and rises above it on an artificial platform that was formed by the construction of a 1.5 metre-wide perimeter retaining and foundation wall. The mosque is oriented on a north-south axis, facing Mecca. It is almost a perfect square measuring 33.6 metres on each side. Inside, it comprised a hypostyle hall with a 'forest' of columns parallel to the external walls (similar to the great mosque at Cordoba), with six north-south rows and seven east-west rows of columns. A small court in the centre of the mosque is formed by the deliberate absence of four columns. The interior thus can be described as having three bays parallel to the qibla wall, and a double portico, or riwaq, around the central court.

Most of the mosque was destroyed by modern construction and other activities since the Umayyad period. The qibla (south) wall and half the west wall are preserved up to a metre high, while just three columns were found in their original place (though the places of the other columns were easily identified by foundation remains). The large mihrab (prayer niche) is well preserved in the south wall. The front of the mosque was entered from the square/souq via a monumental staircase and platform.

Decorative elements found at the site have allowed Arce to elaborate a hypothetical reconstruction of the facade, with three doors amidst a frieze of niches, similar to the ones of the audience hall, showing strong Persian influence.

A well-built, symmetrical building was partially uncovered immediately behind the back of the mosque's qibla wall, with rooms arranged around a central courtyard. Its function is not clear: it has been suggested variously as a khan for travellers, the residence of a religious person, or a facility for the personal use of the emir when he went to pray at the mosque. A small door west of the mihrab of the mosque leads directly to this building through a small back street. Opposite the mosque, on the north side of the square, is the domed audience hall, which was rebuilt on the foundations of an earlier cross-shaped Byzantine building. The audience hall provided access from the square to the palace, which occupies the entire north side of the Citadel. (A Roman era pagan temple probably stood in this area previously). The precise use of the palace is not verified. It seems to have been a 'palatine city' that served both as the residence of the political authority (a governor or emir) and his public administrative complex.

The square was formed by building two rows of shops on the east and west sides of the space between the audience hall and the mosque. The shops comprised a simple row of rooms, each with a door opening onto the square. A row of single columns formed a portico in front of both the east and west shops. Other early Islamic towns (e.g. Anjar, Palmyra, Beisan/Beth-shan) have similar rows of shops, but facing onto streets not onto a major public square.

The placement of the square, the

souq, the congregational mosque, and the palace together in one unified urban design represents an absolutely original town layout in the Umayyad period," Arce said.

"The new layout of the square makes it a commercial area but also the essential organising nucleus of the new city, containing the two most important public buildings — the mosque and the palace, and it is also the meeting place of the principal streets coming from the town gates," he added.

The square/souq established a clear distinction between the mosque and the palace, Arce said, but it could also be used by both. The square could be used for prayers when the mosque could not accommodate all the faithful, and it could also hold audiences who might come to hear the emir speak from the elevated terrace of the audience hall. The square also established a close relationship among the three principal powers of the Umayyad era — the mosque, the royal palace, and the souq/merchants. Arce suggests that this arrangement "bears a resemblance to the later patterns of utopian cities, or even to the real examples of Renaissance cities where the palace, the church and the market were laid out in urban spaces beautifully designed through the formal control of urban imagery."

East of the square is a large esplanade that was left as an open area in the Umayyad period (its previous Byzantine buildings were destroyed and filled in). The esplanade was probably used as an open air prayer area during major feasts, a military parade or exhibition ground, or for other purposes, Arce said.

A large circular water reservoir was built at the north end of the esplanade, near the baths complex that is linked to the royal palace. The bath complex, which has been restored, seems to have been used by both the public and the people inside the royal palace complex, for it is accessible from both areas. Locating the mosque and the baths outside the royal palace and administration complex is unlike the situation at most other Umayyad palaces, Arce said.

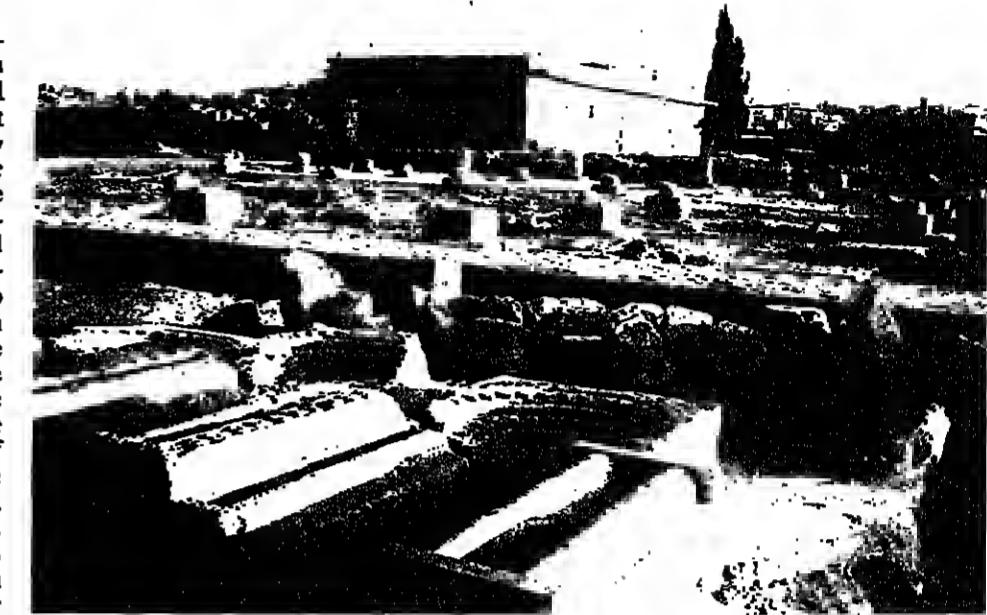
Perhaps this arrangement in Amman aimed to exploit the 'social' nature of these facilities, and to link the royal and public parts of the city through the mechanism of the facilities located around the square/souq. At the mosque and the baths, people could get together for prayer and

leisure, but could also engage in other sorts of business or interactions.

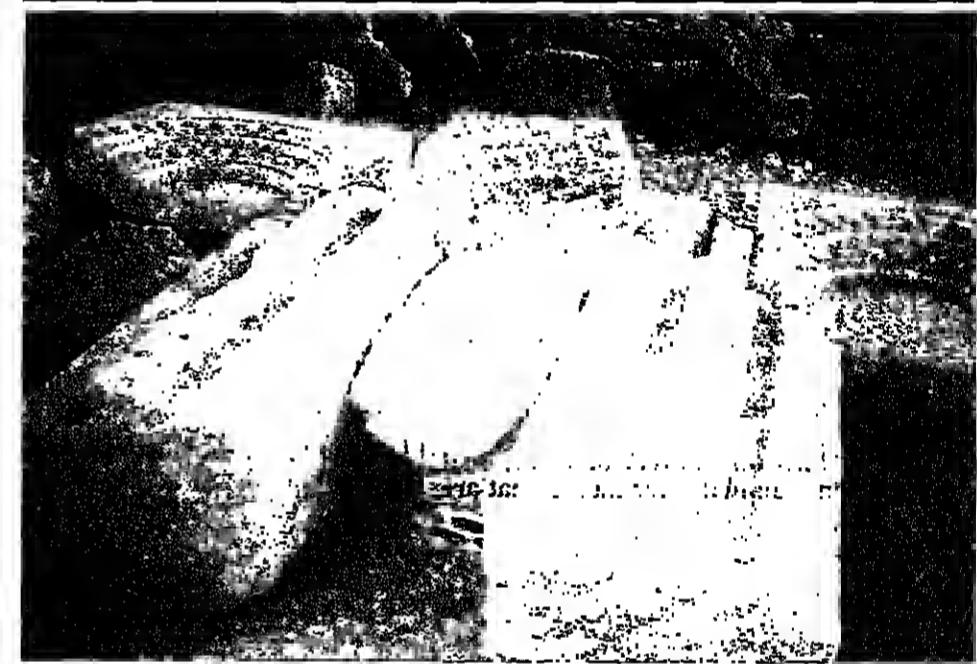
West of the square/souq is a Byzantine-Umayyad residential area that has been only partially excavated; work will continue there after the back wall of the western shops is consolidated. Current efforts focus on understanding the history of the main street on the Citadel, which was



By Rami G. Khouri



General ground-level view of the Citadel mosque from the north, with some of the facade's decorative stones in the foreground (photo by Rami G. Khouri)



Close-up view of some of the decorative stones from the mosque's facade (photo by Rami G. Khouri)

archaeologists Hanadi Taher, Bassim Abbadi and Ghassan Ramahi, and architect/engineer Manal Rimawi. The overall director of the project is Dr. Antonio Almagro, a prominent Spanish scholar who is currently the director of the School of Arab Studies in Granada, Spain. The work is financed primarily by the Spanish government, with technical support and some funding from the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.

Israel launches military offensive in Lebanon

(Continued from page 1)

Netanyahu and Arens accused Hezbollah of violating a three-year-old ceasefire agreement by firing rockets into northern Israel first before dawn on Sunday and again Sunday evening.

"We are not trying to escalate the conflict, but we cannot tolerate these attacks and the continuation of losses among our troops," Netanyahu said.

A spokesman for the Hezbollah militia denied its guerrillas had bombarded northern Israel.

"We deny categorically having shelled northern Israel," he told AFP.

"Not a single shell has emanated from south Lebanon onto northern Israel," he said.

Netanyahu also made clear that his government held the regime in Beirut responsible for the conflict in southern Lebanon, leaving the door open for reprisals against Lebanese targets.

"The cause of this conflict is the military and political inability of the Lebanese government to impose its authority in south Lebanon and prevent the areas from being used as a launching pad for attacks on Israel," he said.

Earlier Sunday, about 20 Israeli blocked traffic outside the defence ministry to protest Israel's occupation of south Lebanon.

The demonstration was organ-

Netanyahu reaffirms ties with Jordan, blames PNA

(Continued from page 1)

"We know that [Hashemite] regime is stable," he said. "It has passed the shock of King Hussein's death, and is getting stable. Jordan has a King and a policy that will continue peaceful relations."

Since the fiasco broke on Friday, Jordan's response to the statements has been subdued. Yesterday, Tarawneh said that "between the prime minister and myself, I think we've clarified the whole thing on the lecture [at Bar Ilan] and the statements."

Officials who attended the yesterday's meeting described the atmosphere as "usual."

Two crucial issues for Jordan — water and economic cooperation — were prime topics during discussions. Jordan is relying on bolstered economic ties with Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to help rehabilitate the economy following the economic devastation wrought by the 1990-1991 Gulf War, when the Kingdom lost its largest bilateral trade partner, Iraq. It is also anxious to secure an additional 50 million cubic metres of water dictated in the peace treaty.

A Jordanian official told the Jordan Times that Minister of Water and Irrigation Hani Mulki and the Israeli Water Commissioner should meet

within days to discuss bilateral water issues. Minister of Trade and Industry Mohammad Saleh Hourani and his Israeli counterpart Natan Sharansky are to meet twice this month, once in the region to renew the bilateral trade accord that expired in January and once in Washington to sign agreements that will expand the Qualifying Industrial Zone to two new zones.

Netanyahu said during discussions, Israel "reaffirmed its commitment to bolster the peace between [Jordan and Israel] and to continue to expand the peace between us and the Palestinians."

"Jordan plays an exemplary role in assisting us in other areas of peace, especially with the Palestinians, and this assistance and skill is very much appreciated," he said. "We have no doubt that we should be able to move the process forward with the Palestinians for the conclusion of Wye and the negotiation and conclusion of a permanent peace."

"We hope this can be done with Syria and eventually Lebanon as well," the prime minister said, just hours before Israel launched an offensive against Lebanon in retaliation for a Hezbollah attack that killed an Israeli general and three others.

However, during his press conference with reporters, he

said the blame lay with the Palestinians for negligible progress in implementing the Wye River accords, signed last October in Washington after a last minute intervention by King Hussein.

Pundits have criticised the Netanyahu administration for stonewalling ahead of elections in Israel scheduled for May 17.

"I want to say clearly that we don't hesitate to move forward with the second phase of the Wye agreement," Netanyahu said. "[Forward movement] was put off not because of elections, but because of the failure of the Palestinians to comply with several key provisions of the accord."

Israel insists that the PNA must reduce its police force, collect illegal weapons and "stop incitement and put in jail rather than free, terrorists" before the process goes forward.

"The implementation of Wye must go forward based on Palestinian implementation, and as Wye specifies, Israeli implementation following," he said.

A Jordanian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that during the meeting Jordan expressed its frustration at the lack of progress on implementing Wye accords.

"We think that the bottom line is implementation," said

Hussein.

"I think he is a wise and able leader in a stable country," he said. "A country that has strong and durable relations with Israel. No one should cast a doubt over that."

The Israeli premier was invited by the late King Hussein in 1996, just ahead of elections that year — a move that many viewed as a tacit endorsement of the Likud candidate after Jordan had grown frustrated with Labour wavering on several issues in the peace process.

Tarawneh yesterday told reporters that Netanyahu's visit should not be interpreted as an expression of preference for one Israeli candidate or another.

"Our policy vis-à-vis Israel and any other country, is that we do not interfere in their internal relations," Tarawneh said.

"We are not here to invite candidates or parties, because [Jordan] is not part of the Israeli elections. Those who want to come are welcome. This is a very open country and we receive everyone. But we do not initiate such invitations to anyone."

The Israeli visit was not welcomed by the Lower House of Parliament, whose members blasted the premier for interfering in the Kingdom's internal affairs.

Deputies described statements attributed to him last

week as "provocative."

"These statements were not made to gain votes in Israel's upcoming elections, but rather express the real intentions of Netanyahu," Deputy Ghalib Zou'bi told his colleagues in Parliament.

"Our relations with Arab countries are issues that concern us alone, and nobody has the right to dictate to us how our foreign policy should be applied," Ayed Adulaile added.

"For the first time in my life I wish such statements by Netanyahu were true. It is our desire to have such an alliance with a country like Iraq," Mohammad Oran told his fellow deputies.

According to Deputy Ahmad Ajarmeh, Netanyahu's statements represent the "mentality of the right-wing Likud which is aimed at creating unrest in the country and the region."

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib told the House that the government had expressed its dismay over Netanyahu's statements and demanded clarifications about his comments.

"We have received the Israeli response regarding our demand... and we believe that our reaction was a proper one," Khatib told the lawmakers.

Tareq Ayyoub contributed to this story.

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Monday, March 1, 1999 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Draft anti-monopoly law seen hampering establishment of large institutions

** PRIVATE SECTOR representatives have expressed their concern about the final draft of the anti-monopoly law which is now in the hands of the Financial Committee of the Lower House of Parliament. They said the draft does not match the economic situation in the Kingdom and warned that the present wording of the proposed law may place a barrier for establishing large economic institutions.

The private enterprises demanded a number of amendments on the articles of the draft law to ease its effects. In memorandum sent to the committee, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the Jordan Businessmen Association and the Amman Chamber of Industry stressed that in principle they are against all forms of monopoly. However, they said: "The draft law does not correspond with the Jordanian economic situation for many reasons, most importantly in that the Jordanian economic institutions, in entirety, are many small entities within a certain sector."

At the same time, the industrial institutions are composed of a small number of major entities and an overwhelming majority

of small industries which represent 90 per cent of all industrial installations operating in the Kingdom. Furthermore, the memorandum indicated, the total investments in Jordanian private sector institutions is probably almost less than the total investments of one of the huge companies in the world. "As to Jordan, the large industrial companies which might fall under the monopoly category, are firms operating in strategic areas and enjoy concessions such as the cement, phosphate, potash, petroleum and electric power companies," the memorandum said.

As such, the private sector representatives said the draft law may put an impediment for the establishment of large institutions through merger on the pretext of banning an illegal measure related to concentration and domination mentioned in the text of the draft law. They noted that that comes at a time when Jordan needs large companies to be able to compete in a world of openness and globalisation.

The private bodies expressed their willingness to hold meetings with the Financial Committee to explain their views on the subject (Al Dustour).

Japan contributes JD4.5 million for vocational centre in Amman

** JAPAN HAS contributed JD4.5 million (\$ 6.3 million) to set up a vocational centre for industrial metal work, the Petra News Agency reported this week.

It said the project is the first of its kind in the middle East.

The centre, which is being built in an industrial zone in the Amman, is being

financed by Japan's International Cooperation Agency. Petra said. Japan also plans to hold a training course in Tokyo for 25 Jordanians in metal work, the news agency added. Japan is Jordan's largest donor, providing more than \$4 billion in aid and loans since 1974.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 1, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Don't argue with fate or the quality control inspector. Your lesson is perfection and you'll be so proud of yourself once you've achieved it. Start by knowing what's expected of you. Others may have different ideas of what that is. Part of the assignment is to get them to agree, so you can win!

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Romance beckons, but you'll have trouble getting away. It's not just your job that demands your time. Your friends need your attention, too. Your loved one needs top priority, but handle that matter responsibly. Don't just ditch your friends. Make sure they know your part of the job is handled.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may not know if you're coming or going today. And if you don't set priorities early, you're almost certain to be doing the one when you should be doing the other. Everybody's got an opinion about how things should be done. You can listen, but make your own choices.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Information's coming in almost faster than you can keep track of it. Fight being overwhelmed by getting organised. Then all you have to do is sort the data by category. You or somebody else can go through it later. Today, just make sure it gets saved in the first place, where you can find it.

LEO: (July 23 to August 21) Conditions look good for making money today. That's the good news. The bad news is that you could lose it just as quickly. Just remember that, if you feel like having another roll of the dice. Quite while you're ahead, instead.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're confident today, and with good reason. You're smart, and everybody knows it. Don't get cocky, though. That could make you careless, and that could make you miss a subtle nuance. That, in turn, could keep you from nailing a change in plans. Prove you're smart, by catching every detail.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The ballways are abuzz with gossip. The walls have ears, and your eye is probably at the keyhole. You're not being nosy, of course. You're just interested. But don't act on what you hear. Not all the evidence has been presented yet.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You should be feeling good and looking great today. Most people are willing to go along with your suggestions, especially those who know you well. That's because they think you're most likely right. Don't fall into that trap yourself. Proceed with confidence and caution. You may still have one or two blind spots.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you're in the right place at the right time, you'll do quite well for yourself. It won't take much effort, either. Final that "up" escalator to the job of your dreams. It'll look like a combination of education and the support of one you love, plus doing the work.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Others are confused today, but you can see exactly what needs to be done. Did you know that Capricorn is the sign of the boss? That's because Capricorns keep their heads about them when all others are losing theirs. You're good at keeping long-term objectives in mind. Today, remind people what they are.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) If you focus your attention carefully, you can fill out the paperwork perfectly today. Otherwise, you might have to go over it two or three times, and that'll make the whole process take longer. This is paperwork associated with money, by the way, so it's to your advantage to get it done right the first time.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You've got a friend who's a real know-it-all, constantly telling you how to live your life. Well, today, listen to what he or she has to say. Take notes. It'll catch this person off guard, and totally change the way he or she thinks of you. That's worth the effort right there.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Swatch '98 net profit rises

BIEL, Switzerland (AFP) — Swatch group has announced a 7.5 per cent rise in net income for 1998 to 357 million Swiss francs (223.6 million euros, \$246.2 million) despite a drop in business to Asia.

Sales in the year rose seven per cent in Swiss franc terms to 3.17 billion francs, the company said in a statement.

While sales of watches grew by 2.3 per cent, sales of watch parts to third parties fell, owing largely to fierce price competition of electronic movements in Hong Kong triggered by Japanese manufacturers, Swatch said.

Asian exports overall fell five per cent in Swiss franc terms, though they rose two per cent in local currency terms.

Sales to Japan rose 11 per cent, to China seven per cent and Australia 28 per cent, but declined to Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea.

Exports to Europe rose by almost seven per cent in Swiss currency terms and by eight per cent to the United States.

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Just one more Wimbledon is retiring Becker's dream

BONN (AFP) — Former Wimbledon champion Boris Becker will quit tennis for good later this year — but cannot resist a crack at a final appearance in his 'back garden' of Wimbledon.

Becker is set to make his farewell appearance in an ATP Tour event in Stuttgart in July, but he told weekly magazine Der Spiegel in an interview to be published Monday that a Wimbledon appearance is still very much on.

"If the preparations go well then I will appear — if injury holds me back then I will not. I have too much respect for Wimbledon to turn up, go through the motions and get thrashed off court," Becker added.

"I don't care who I play — I just want another day on Centre Court," said Becker, who lifted the famous trophy in 1985 aged just 17, retained it in 1986 and then won a third crown in 1989.

"If my fitness allows and I can get through five or six tournaments in the next few months I'll put in for the singles. My ranking is still good enough for a direct entry," said Becker.



Boris Becker

Becker, who pulled out of this week's tournament in London with gastroenteritis, has been in semi-retirement for the past 18 months.

But the 31-year-old triple Wimbledon champion said that he was itching for another crack at a fourth title at his favourite event —

despite having previously insisted that his All-England Club days were over.

"I have made my decision — I will quit in the summer. To keep up my game would mean concentrating completely on tennis. I will manage until the summer but then that's it," said Becker, who has plenty of other strings to his bow as German Davis Cup Captain, talent-spotter and entrepreneur.

The German, now ranked 77 in the world, said the long winding down of his career meant that it would be easier when it finally came to say his goodbyes.

Becker is pinning his hopes on youngsters Tommy Haas and Nicolas Kiefer as the men to keep the German flag flying after he finally hangs up his racket.

"Haas is really on the way to fulfilling his great potential while Kiefer also has bags of talent. But Michael Stich and I set a high standard to follow," he said.

Becker again expressed his concerns about the future of tennis, which he said was too keen on "making a fast buck".



Algerian fencer Wassila Radouane (R) lunges to score against Egyptian Samar Mohamed Housam during the finals of the African women's foil championships in Tunis. Wassila Radouane won gold (AFP photo)

McRae wins Safari Rally

NAIROBI (AFP) — Scotsman Colin McRae won the Safari Rally on Sunday as the new Ford focus triumphed in only its third World Championship start.

McRae took out the world's toughest rally by nearly eight minutes from world champion Tommi Mäkinen of Finland in a Mitsubishi.

McRae's victory was Ford's first in the safari rally for 22 years. Frenchman Didier Auriol was third, ahead of his Toyota teammate Carlos Sainz of Spain.

Tony Mäkinen protested Mäkinen's second-place finish, claiming the Finn had received illegal assistance when fixing a puncture on the second day.

Munich extend Bundesliga lead to 12 points

COLOGNE (AFP) — Hansa Rostock were able to hold Bayern Munich for more than an hour on Saturday but then the floodgates opened and Bayern strode to a 4-0 win to extend their lead over the rest of the competition to 12 points.

Goals were scarce commodities in the Bundesliga with only seven in six games — and Bayern Munich scored more than half of them in a late flurry.

Borussia Dortmund defeated FC Nuremberg 3-0 while all the day's other games — Freiburg versus VfL Wolfsburg, Hamburg versus Bayer Leverkusen, Eintracht Frankfurt versus Borussia Monchengladbach and 1860 Munich versus Duisburg — ended as tame 0-0 draws.

Bayern profited from the goal drought and, sitting on 30 points, moved 12 clear of opponents Bayer Leverkusen and

Kaiserslautern who have 38 points.

Bayern may have put four goals on the board but they were made to wait patiently for their success by a tenacious Hansa Rostock who held them for more than an hour through sheer grit and tenacity.

Bayern's Giovane Elber wasted several golden opportunities to score in the opening half hour but finally found the target in the 69th minute. Bayern's first of the day.

It proved psychologically crucial and cracked Rostock's confidence.

Elber's second goal after 87 minutes was superb.

Rostock keeper Martin Piekenhagen lost the ball to him when he failed to clear near the corner flag. Elber then delicately lobbed the ball and curled it past the far post.

Before that, Carsten Jancker proved how perfectly things are running for Bayern right now when

he slipped over while shooting — and still scored.

Lothar Matthaus, who turns 38 next month, sent home a cracking shot in the 89th minute and a fifth goal ought to have been credited to Stefan Effenberg after he and Elber made a defence-splitting run in injury time but the linesman incorrectly flagged him offside.

"I'm annoyed because there were some strange referee decisions today, in particular that last goal by Effenberg. He came up from behind the ball, you've just got to see that kind of thing," Matthaus said.

"We didn't play so well today," Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said.

"I was only happy with the first half an hour when we created lots of chances on goal. We didn't convert any but then in the second half we played poorly and did score," he added.

Hitzfeld refused to blame

his side's average form on pre-match pressure before next week's Champions' League clash with Kaiserslautern and insisted his men were focused only on Rostock.

"Our showing in the second half had nothing to do with us thinking ahead to the champions' league match but more to do with Rostock playing well," Hitzfeld said.

"We were sloppy and gave away the ball too easily. That just can't be allowed to happen."

Bayer Leverkusen dropped two more valuable points in Hamburg's Volkspark stadium, losing all hope of catching Bayern.

1860 Munich, who were 4-1 winners over Eintracht Frankfurt last week, were stopped in their tracks by Duisburg while Borussia Monchengladbach and Eintracht Frankfurt's meager 0-0 draw underlined their basement status.

The result did neither club any good.

Gladbach's star Austrian striker Toni Polster started the game on the bench, a move which seems to mark the beginning of the end for him at the club.

Nuremberg's 3-0 defeat at Dortmund confirms them in 17th place while Borussia now have renewed hopes of bagging a UEFA Cup place.

On Friday, VfB Stuttgart drew 1-1 with Kaiserslautern and Werder Bremen drew 1-1 with VfL Bochum.

If Sunday's game between Schalke 04 and Hertha Berlin ends 0-0, round 20 of the Bundesliga will enter the record books for its lack of goals.

What is the best way to tackle five diamonds after the last lead of spades? Believe it or not, claim your contract — there is no way the opponents can defeat you!

Efficient preemption by the opposition forced South, who opened with an overcall of bid, and North to ruff at a high level.

South wisely elected to ruff the long diamond suit and North, with excellent support for partner and some values, prudently decided that, without a single prime card, an 11-trick contract was high enough.

SCOPEBOARD

NBA

Houston	86	Vancouver	74
Portland	82	Washington	81
Boston	101	New Jersey	92
Dallas	97	Sacramento	90
Chicago	94	Charlotte	7
Atlanta	103	LA Clippers	74

English Premiership

Aston Villa	1	Coventry	4
C. Athletic	0	Notm Forest	0
Chelsea	2	Liverpool	1
Everton	1	Wimbledon	1
Man. Utd	2	Southampton	1
Sheffield Wed	3	Middlesbrough	1
Tot. Hotspur	1	Derby County	1
West Ham	2	B. Rovers	0

Spanish League

Real Betis	3	Real Madrid	2
A. Madrid	0	Oviedo	0
Athletic Bilbao	0	Celta Vigo	0
Barcelona	2	Valencia	4

Italian League

Piacenza	5	Bologna	0
AS Roma	1	AC Milan	0
Inter Milan	0	Juventus	0
Parma	3	Perugia	1

Dutch League

Nec Nijmegen	1	MVV Maastricht	1
W. II Tilburg	1	FC Utrecht	0
R. JC Kerkrade	8	Az'67 Alkmaar	2
Psv Eindhoven	2	Nac	0
C. Leeuwarden	2	Vitesse Arnhem	2

Yugoslav League

Obilic Belgrade	5	Buducnost Podgorica	0
M. Belgrade	4	Osf Belgrade	0
Hajduk Kula	2	Radnicki Nis	0
Rad Belgrade	1	Spartak Subotica	0
Zemun	2	Mogren Budva	0
S. Smederevo	1	R. Star Belgrade	1
P. Zrenjanin	2	Z. Belgrade	2
P. Belgrade	3	Pristina	0

Portuguese League

Rio Ave.	1	Estrela Amadora	1
Beira Mar	2	Sporting	2
Uniao Leiria	0	Sporting Braga	0

Belgian League

Mouscron	2	Ostend	1
Lommel	0	Alost	3
Westero	0	Lierse	2
Saint-Truiden	1	Anderlecht	4
Beveren	0	Standard Liege	6
Charleroi	1	Gent	1
FG Brugge	4	Lokeren	0

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIAH HIRSCH
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WHERE'S WALDO? WHO CARES!

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



National soccer team named

AMMAN — Trainers of the Jordan's soccer team have named the line-up of nominated players to represent the Kingdom in the 9th Pan-Arab Games, which will be held here Aug. 15-31. The list includes 14 players from the top two teams of Al Wihdat and Faisali teams, 7 from the Olympic team and the rest from other teams. The new formation consists mostly of players who represented the country in the qualifiers and finals of Arab Cup in Qatar last summer where Jordan was eliminated in the first round. The team now includes Mohammad Abu Daoud, Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Khalid Bakar (new), Muhamad Mahdin, Adnan Awad, Abdullah Abu Zam'eh, Amjad Taher, Osama Talal, Faisal Ibrahim, Othman Obeida (new), Haytham Shboul, Leith Dardour (Olympic team), Subhi Suleiman, Sufian Abdullah, Abdullah Shawayah, Ra'fat Ali, Badran Shaqrani, Jeries Tadrus, Mu'ayad Salim (new), Murad Hassan, Ismael Khatib (new), Bassam Khatib, Bassbar Bani Yasin (Olympic team), Mohammad Azzazi (Olympic team), Haytham Sanarin (Olympic team), Hatem Aqel (Olympic team), Hamdi Saeed (Olympic team) and Hasounah Sheikh (Olympic team). Veterans Yousef Amouri, Isam Mahmoud, Jihad Abdul Munem, Munir Abu Hantash, Hussein Shanayneh, Mu'taz Rishesh and Walid Abdul Rahman were not nominated.

Najjar to attend IOC course

AMMAN — Jordan's Tareq Najjar, a leading member of the athletics national team, will leave for Germany next week to participate in a six-month training course, which will be organised by the German federation. The course is sponsored by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as part of preparing developing countries' players for 2000 Sydney Olympics. Najjar has represented Jordan in international events in the last two years and has a record of 52.66 metres in the discus. The Jordan Olympic Committee had also chosen swimmer Hana Majaj and weight lifter Ayed Khawaleh for similar courses. Khawaleh was later excluded after testing positive for performance enhancing drugs, at the Bangkok Asian Games in December.

Dates set for Games meetings

AMMAN — The directorate of the 9th Pan-Arab Games has decided to postpone the meeting of representatives of Arab countries taking part in the Games from May 9 to May 11. In its recent meeting in Algeria, the Arab ministerial committee charged with supervision of preparations for the August 15-31 Games, also decided to set May 9 for its third meeting. The meeting, headed by Games Director Isam Aridah, also discussed the possibility of including surfing among the events in the Games.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Serena Williams claims 1st crown

PARIS (AFP) — American teenager Serena Williams won her first career WTA Tour singles title here on Sunday when she edged to a dramatic 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4) victory in just under two hours over France's sixth-seeded Amelie Mauresmo in the final of the \$520,000 Paris Indoor Open.

At one stage she led 4-1 in the third set and served for the match at 5-4.

The chanting, clapping, stamping, banner-waving mauresmo supporters, already in full flow half-an-hour before the players even came on court, failed to put Williams off her stride.

And in fact it was the 19-year-old Mauresmo who was then first to give ground by surrendering a nervous first set to the 24th-ranked American in 32 minutes after two consecutive service breaks.

Mauresmo, showing the strain after non-stop media attention during a week which saw her avenge her loss in last month's Australian Open final by beating World No. 1 Martina Hingis in the quarter-finals, did well to climb back into the match in the second set — twice breaking the 17-year-old Williams.

But when Williams romped 4-1 clear in the third the hopes of the French player looked bleak. But Mauresmo turned the match around and surged back to 4-4 with an inch-perfect volley.

However, she then played a sloppy service game leaving Williams to serve for the set but the American, watched by poker-faced mother Oracene in the players' box, failed to clinch it and the title was decided in a dramatic tie-break.

It was the fourth time during the tournament that the big-

hitting Williams had beaten a French player.

She also scored straight-set victories over second-seeded Wimbledon finalist Nathalie Tauziat, 1996 Paris champion Julie Hingis and Decugis and Nathalie Dechy.

Sunday's result means that Williams will stay just outside the top-twenty when the new rankings are published on Sunday while Mauresmo will move up two places to 16th.

The victory could rewrite the history books if Serena's fifth-ranked older sister Venus Williams also wins in the final of the WTA event in Oklahoma later today.

The last time two sisters contested different titles was in 1991 when Bulgaria's Manuela Maleeva was runner-up in Barcelona while Magdalena Maleeva was a beaten finalist in Bol, Croatia.

U.S. Athletics Championships

Devers endures while Greene falters

ATLANTA (AFP) — Reigning Olympic sprint champion Gail Devers won her third meeting in a week while Maurice Greene led a set of well-rested disappointments at the United States Athletics Championships.

Devers captured her third 60m U.S. indoor title, taking the final here Saturday in 7.04secs and qualifying to defend her global crown next week at the World Indoor Championships in Maebashi, Japan.

"My first round felt terrible," Devers said.

"Second round I felt better and in the final there was just so much going on. I didn't have a time in mind. I just wanted to get through it. I wanted to go to Japan."

Greene approached his world record in the 60m semi-finals only to finish second. Reigning world indoor champions Kevin Little and Charles Austin were also upset, as was shot put star John Godina.

Devers, who also won the U.S. indoor crown in 1993 and 1997, won her semi-final in 7.02. She had clocked a 1999 world best 6.98secs in France last Sunday and won in 7.02 in Stockholm on Thursday.

Devers arrived here 20 hours before her first race and ran after a restless night but still had enough to beat Inger Miller, second in 7.15.

"I had exactly one hour

and 12 minutes of sleep last night," she said. "I couldn't sleep so I just got up and got on my computer."

Devers missed last year's outdoor season with an injured Achilles tendon, helping inspire her for indoor races.

"I'm happy I'm healthy," she said. "Last year, sitting around in a cast while everyone else was running was the hardest thing."

Greene teased a Georgia Dome crowd of about 5,000 in the semi-finals, winning his heat in 6.40secs, just off his world indoor record 6.39 from last year in Madrid.

But in the final, Greene was left behind in the blocks from the start and Tim Hardeau, the 1995 U.S. indoor champion, won in 6.44secs to earn his first berth on a U.S. international squad.

Greene barely rallied to take second in 6.49, edging training partner Jon Drummond by 0.2 of a second for the final world berth.

"I felt something twinge in my right hamstring in the prelims, so I wasn't sure about the race coming into the final," Greene said.

Harden said Greene's ego was hurt more than his leg.

"Maurice was not injured going into the race, but he may have gotten injured afterwards.

"No one ever picks me to win. I really didn't care how

fast he ran in the rounds. I race to get to the finals and then go fast."

Reigning Olympic and world indoor high jump champion Austin, reigning world 200m indoor king Little and 1996 Olympic shot put silver medalist Godina joined Greene as major disappointments.

In the 200m, Rohsan Griffin became the third-fastest man indoors by setting a us record of 20.32, breaking the old mark of 20.40 shared by little and Jeff Williams.

"I was totally surprised I ran as fast as I did," Griffin said. "I feel very good and I expect to run faster at worlds."

Little was second in 20.41, barely earning a chance to defend his world crown.

"It was my second-best time ever," Little said. "We were even on the last run, but coming off he got the slingshot effect."

Henry Patterson won the high-jump at 2.19m; the same height cleared by runner-up Stephen Smith, with Austin sharing third at 2.21.

But because Austin was the only American to reach the world qualifying mark of 2.31 by last Wednesday's deadline, he alone advanced to Japan.

Andy Bloom was a surprise shot put winner at 20m82 with C.J. Hunter second while being cheered



Reggie Torian of the U.S. clears the last hurdle in the final of the Men's 60M hurdles at the U.S. Indoor Track & Field Championship at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, GA. Torian won the gold in a time of 7.38 (AFP photo)

on his wife, star sprinter Marion Jones, who skipped the indoor season.

Godina, unheated in the event last year on his way to us indoor and outdoor crowns, was third at 20.59 and failed to qualify for the worlds.

"I'm not going to worry much about this meet," Godina said. "I'm really focusing on outdoors."

Reigning world 400m indoor champion Jearl Miles-Clark overcame being bumped at the mid-

point but passed along the outside to win in 51.97secs, matching the fourth-best run all time, while reigning world indoor pole vault champion Stacy Dragila won the U.S. title by clearing 4.45.

Lance Clark, 37, won a record 11th us indoor title with a 23m76 winning weight-throw effort. Jeff Hartwig set an American pole-vault record at 5m92, breaking the mark of 5m91 he set in January at Reno, Nevada.

• Pippen leads Rockets past Grizzlies; Bulls beat Hornets

VANCOUVER (R) — Scottie Pippen scored 12 of his 18 points in the decisive third quarter as the Houston Rockets continued their dominance of the Vancouver Grizzlies with a sluggish 86-74 victory Saturday.

Coming off his first triple-double in three seasons, Pippen had eight rebounds and five assists. After a brief halftime speech, he scored 10 points in a 16-5 burst midway through the third period that gave Houston a 20-point lead.

"I told 'em we've got to come out and keep our energy up and not have our third-quarter letdown," Pippen said. "That's been a thorn in our sides." Hakeem Olajuwon also scored 18 points and grabbed nine rebounds for Houston. Shareef Abdur-Rahim had 20 points and 16 rebounds for Vancouver.

In Washington, Jimmy

Jackson's 20-foot jumper with 39 seconds to go completed a late rally as the Portland Trail Blazers edged the Washington Wizards, 82-81, for their sixth win in seven games.

Juan Howard scored 25 points for the Wizards.

At New Jersey, Antoine Walker scored 28 points and rookie Paul Pierce added 21 as the two combined to fuel a decisive fourth-quarter surge, lifting the Boston Celtics to a 101-92 victory over the slumping New Jersey Nets.

New Jersey (2-10) entered the campaign as a dark horse contender for the Eastern Conference crown based on its core of young, improving players.

However, it is mired in its longest skid since dropping seven in a row from February 28-March 12.

In Dallas, Gary Trent came off the bench to collect career highs of 29 points and 16 rebounds —

most of them against star forward Chris Webber — as the Dallas Mavericks defeated the Sacramento Kings, 97-90.

Trent shot 14-of-25 from the field, many of them on mid-range jump shots. He also had two blocks.

In a matchup of tired teams, Trent carried Dallas to its third win in four games. He scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, including a pair of key baskets to slow a rally by Sacramento.

Reserve guard Robert Pack scored 21 points for the Mavericks.

In Chicago, Toni Kukoc scored 16 points and Andrew Lang added 14

and 10 rebounds as the Chicago Bulls beat the Charlotte Hornets 94-77.

Derrick Coleman scored 17 points and Chuck Person and David Wesley added 13 apiece for the Hornets, who have lost seven of their last eight games.

Chicago coach Tim Floyd was fined \$5,000 by the league earlier today for verbally abusing officials after Thursday's 98-80 home loss to Philadelphia.

In Anaheim, California, playing their third game in as many days and doing so without their leading scorer and the No. 1 pick in the 1998 draft, it was no surprise that the Los Angeles

Clippers suffered their most humiliating loss of the season.

Dikembe Mutombo and Mookie Blaylock both recorded double-doubles as the short-handed Atlanta Hawks handed the

winless Clippers their 12th consecutive loss, 103-74.

Mutombo had 11 points and 11 rebounds and Blaylock added 13 points and 11 assists for the Hawks.

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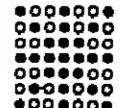
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Israeli closure bars sick Palestinian from Jerusalem

Closure 'propaganda' for elections — PNA official

Agencies

ISRAELI SOLDIERS on Sunday barred the nine-year-old son of the Palestinian intelligence chief from entering Jerusalem for medical treatment, hours after sealing off Palestinian areas, a Palestinian security official said.

"Hussein Tirawi is nine years old, he has a permit to enter Jerusalem and he has been going for treatment from an accident for three years and the soldiers know him. The soldiers turned him and his mother back to Jericho without giving a reason," said the senior official, insisting on anonymity.

An Israeli police spokeswoman confirmed they were denied entry but said this was because the mother who was travelling with the boy had failed to produce a special permit needed at the time of closure and the case was not a health emergency.

Members of Tirawi's family said the Tirawis were turned back at an army checkpoint near Jerusalem. Tawfiq Tirawi, Hussein's father, is West Bank intelligence chief. He lives in self-ruled Jericho.

Israel imposed the closure

early on Sunday ahead of the Jewish festival of Purim, which has been marked in recent years by Arab-Israeli violence. The army said the closure would remain in effect at least until Wednesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu differed with his defence minister on Palestinian security cooperation on Sunday, and each cited different reasons for the closure on the Palestinian territories.

Netanyahu said the closure, which went into effect Sunday at midnight (2200 GMT), was necessary because the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was not fulfilling its commitments to fight anti-Israel attacks, particularly by the Islamic militant group Hamas.

"They haven't lifted a finger... against Hamas," Netanyahu told Israel's army radio.

By contrast, Defence Minister Moshe Arens said there was effective security cooperation.

"We have cooperation today, I would say, on a good level," Arens told Israel Radio. "It's clear that the Palestinian [National] Authority is not

interested in terrorist attacks."

A senior Palestinian official assured Israel for sealing its borders Sunday with the West Bank and Gaza Strip, linking the move to Netanyahu's struggling campaign for reelection.

"This is a wrong and aggressive step which violates peace agreements and hurts the Palestinian people," said Nabil Shaath, international cooperation minister in the PNA.

"This is one more propaganda operation for the Israeli elections," he said, referring to general elections in May.

Shaath noted that the closure prevents tens of thousands of Palestinians from reaching day jobs in Israel and prevents trade and travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"This damages the Palestinian people's economic life," he told AFP, adding that "Israel has never arrested a worker with a legal permit for committing an attack on Israeli society."

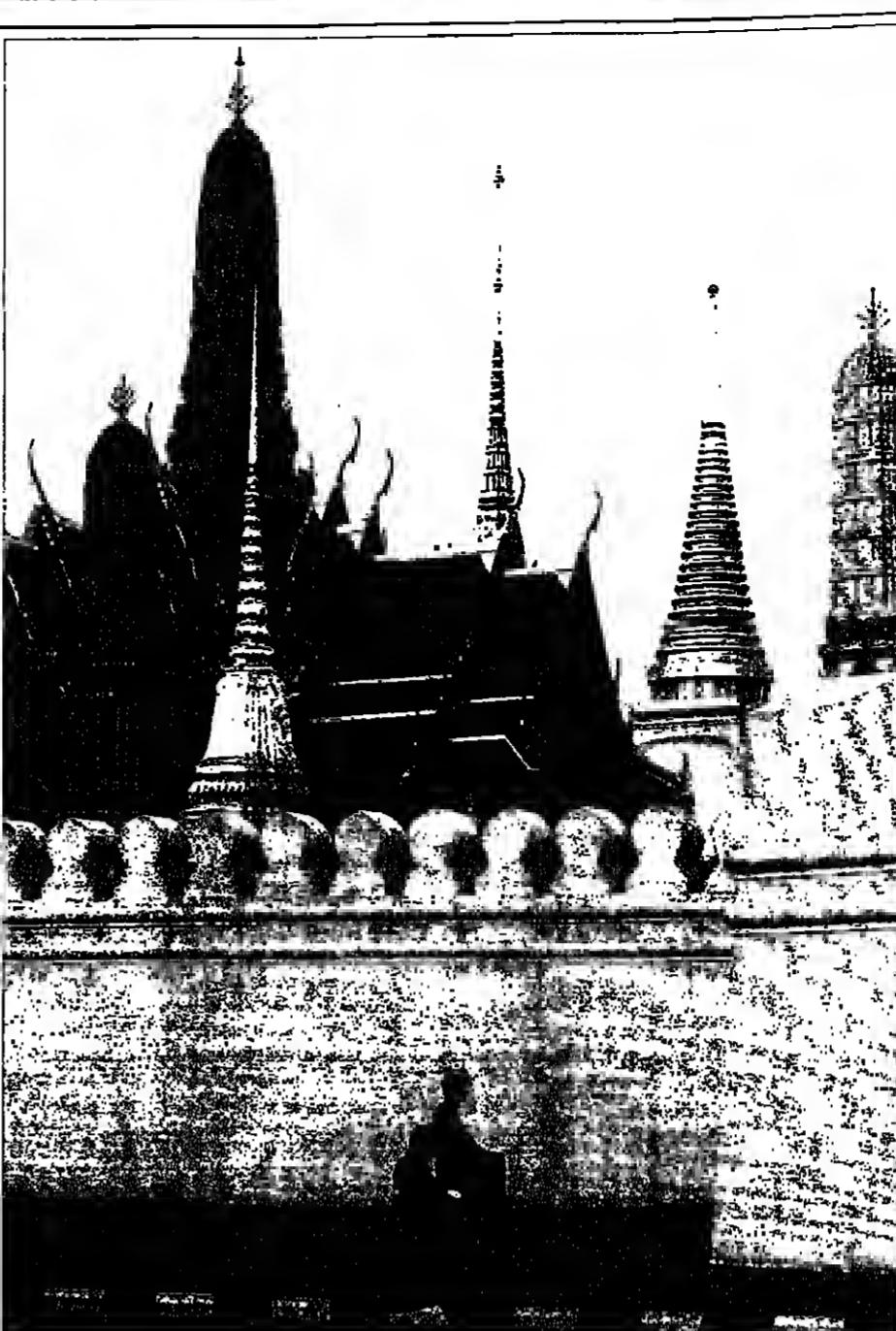
Palestinian preventive security chief Jibril Al Rajoub said the closure was imposed as a form of collective punishment for the Palestinian people and their authority and not because Israel received warnings of attacks.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian teenager was wounded by Israeli soldiers Sunday when villagers clashed with Jewish settlers building a new road on land near Tulkarem, witnesses said.

The incident occurred when about 30 residents of Shuhah began digging up a road bulldozed two days earlier across village fields by Israelis from the nearby Jewish settlement of Aye Hafetz in the northern West Bank, they said.

About 30 Israeli soldiers and settlers arrived to protect the road and scuffles broke out. The troops opened fire with rubber-coated metal bullets, slightly injuring one 17-year-old Palestinian, they said.

One man was hurt in a similar clash Saturday outside the Palestinian-run town of Bethlehem, where Jewish settlers recently set up a new farm in an apparent bid to create a new Jewish enclave.



BUDDHIST MONKS PREPARE FOR MAGHA PUJA DAY: Two Buddhist monks Sunday stroll past Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok. Thai Buddhists will celebrate the full moon day on March 1, Magha Puja Day, the day 1250 monks ordained by the Buddha gathered without notice and the day the Buddha taught for the first time his teachings (AP photo)

Italian premier plans to ask Clinton for support for Kurds

ROME (AP) — Italian Premier Massimo D'Alema says he will ask U.S. President Bill Clinton to push Turkey to recognise civil rights for Kurds and to give a fair trial to Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish leader imprisoned in Turkey.

D'Alema is scheduled to meet with Clinton on Friday in Washington during a long-scheduled visit.

Turkey is "against terrorism and for the territorial integrity of Turkey," a reference for the nearly 15-year-old war in southeastern Turkey between Ocalan's rebels and Turkish troops. D'Alema said in an interview published Sunday in Rome daily *Il Messaggero*. "However, we can't renounce defending democratic principles."

Italy temporarily sheltered Ocalan, branded by both Washington and Ankara as a terrorist, for two months after he requested political asylum. Rome refused to extradite him to Turkey because it opposed the death penalty.

After Ocalan left Italy in January, he roamed about for a country to take him, and eventually was captured in Kenya by Turkish commandos and spirited off to Turkey, where he awaits trial on charges of terrorism which could bring the death penalty.

"We can't establish hierarchies among the civil and political rights of different peoples, considering the Kosovars major league and the Kurds minor league," D'Alema continued.

"Thus we must ask Turkey for the recognition of those rights, starting with a fair trial for Ocalan. And if the United States also asks that the possibility for success obviously increases a lot," the newspaper quoted the premier as saying.

There has been concern by human rights monitors both in Turkey and abroad over whether Ocalan can get a fair trial there. Ankara insists the trial, by a state security court, will be fair.

Starting Monday, D'Alema, the first former communist to lead an Italian government, will join in a meeting in Milan of European socialist leaders.

Pushing his crusade for Italian political reform, D'Alema indicated he would support an extended two-year-term for President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, whose seven-year-term runs out in May.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait stages poultry beauty contest

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — A Kuwaiti "in love with the beauty of chickens" has held the second annual pageant for the best-looking cock and hen in this oil-rich emirate, a newspaper reported Sunday. Ahmad Al Said, an amateur breeder who has long campaigned for a committee to represent Kuwait's chickens, told the *Al Watan* daily that 120 birds participated in Friday's grueling 10-hour contest at a farm west of Kuwait City. The finest went before a three-strong jury in the final who judged them on the attractiveness of their comb, chest, legs, beak, eyes and body. In a close-fought final, before which the jurors had to swear an oath in front of the packed gallery not to use "wasta," or influence, "The Shak" and "Rumour" emerged at the top of the pecking order as finest rooster and hen.

Falae to contest Nigerian elections

ABUJA (AP) — A top aide to Nigerian presidential candidate Olu Falae said Sunday that Saturday's election was "completely rigged" and the Falae plans to contest the election results. The announcement cast a shadow over an election that had been billed as a rare chance to bring democracy to Africa's most populous country after 15 years of military rule. The presidential election was only the third in Nigerian history. Falae and top officials in his Alliance for Democracy Party — as well as the All Peoples Party that also backed his candidacy — were heading to the capital city of Abuja to meet with election officials, said the aide, party secretary Sunday Durodola. "The vote was completely rigged," Durodola said in a telephone interview from Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital. "We have not had free and fair elections and Falae will contest this" (see earlier story on page 4).

Ex-British official says euro will fail

LONDON (AP) — A former governing Labour Party treasury chief on Sunday announced the formation of a new group aimed at stopping Prime Minister Tony Blair adopting the euro, and predicted a quick collapse of the new European currency. The move by Denis Healey, who as chancellor of the exchequer in the 1970s presided over a British balance-of-payments crisis that rocked the pound, reflected a deepening national dispute over whether to abandon the Sterling. "An economic recession will require the existing members of European Monetary Union (EMU) to have different interest rates and exchange rates," Healey said in an interview with GMTV. "I myself believe that EMU will probably break down before Blair is called on to take a decision whether or not Britain should join," added Healey.

Netanyahu at fault for peace deadlock

CAIRO (AP) — Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo on Sunday blamed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the "catastrophic" stalemate facing Arab-Israeli peace talks. "We agreed with President [Hosni] Mubarak that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is responsible for the stalemate," Di Rupo told reporters after meeting the Egyptian head of state here. "The stalemate facing the peace process is a catastrophe. It is necessary to find a way of resuming the peace process after the Israeli elections, otherwise violence will erupt anew in the region," he said. Di Rupo, who is also Belgium's minister of economy, and other senior cabinet ministers are accompanying Belgian Crown Prince Philippe to Cairo on a three-day visit to explore investment opportunities in Egypt.

Egyptians appeal for "fair" Ocalan trial

CAIRO (AP) — Around 1,500 Egyptian intellectuals, including Nobel Literature laureate Naguib Mahfouz, on Sunday urged Turkey to capture Kurdish rebel Abdullah Ocalan a "fair trial." "We personally appeal to the Turkish President [Suleyman Demirel] to give Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan a fair trial and guarantees," the signatories said in a petition of which AFP received a copy.

Taleban guarantee safety of U.N. staff

KABUL (AP) — Leaders of Afghanistan's Taleban militia Sunday assured full safety and security for United Nations staff if they returned to Kabul. U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said after talks with the hardline Islamic militia, "Today, they gave us very strong assurances" that the safety of U.N. staff will be "fully guaranteed," he told reporters before leaving for Islamabad after the one-day visit. The U.N. withdrew its international staff after an Italian officer, Colonel Carmine Calo, was shot dead in Kabul hours after the Aug. 20 U.S. cruise missile attacks on alleged Saudi terrorist Osama Ben Laden's suspected base in Afghanistan.

Iraq sends arms reports to U.N., refuses to deal with disarmament panel

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said on Sunday it had presented a report on destruction of its prohibited weapons to the United Nations Security Council but insisted it would not deal with a U.N. panel on disarming the country.

Oil Minister Amir Mohammad Rashid, at a news conference marking the anniversary of oil nationalisation, also warned that Iraq would soon teach patrolling Western warplanes a "good lesson" that would end no-fly zones in its north and south.

"We are hoping in the very near future that they are taught... a lesson," he said, referring to U.S. and British planes enforcing the zones set up to protect Iraqi Kurds in the north and Muslim Shiites in the south from possible attacks by Baghdad.

Rashid said Baghdad would welcome a visit to Iraq by the head of the U.N. disarmament panel, Brazilian U.N. envoy Celso Amorim, provided he came "as ambassador of Brazil to the U.N. not as a head of any of these panels."

Iraq criticised the panels last month, saying they will cause months of delay while international sanctions imposed over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait remained in place. Rashid contested figures given by U.S. officials on destruction of Iraqi air defences in a spate of recent strikes by Western warplanes challenged over the no-fly zones.

"What they are saying are not the facts. They are failing in their action," Rashid said.

A U.S. defence official said on Tuesday that U.S. and British warplanes had destroyed about 20 per cent of Iraq's anti-aircraft missile batteries.

An Iraqi newspaper urged the Arab League on Sunday to work with some of the U.N. Security Council's permanent members to end the no-fly zones, which Baghdad says are illegal.

"If there are major foreign countries... calling for non-interference in Iraq's affairs... the Arabs, therefore, should work with these [U.N.] permanent members... to stop aggression," the ruling Baath Party paper Al Thawra said.

The han followed four days of intensive air and missile strikes on Iraq led by the

military counteroffensive Operation Sunset," a statement from the government spokesman's office said after heavy fighting in the Badme zone of the front lines.

Ethiopian Radio announced on Sunday morning that Addis Ababa's troops were in full control of Badme, which had been taken by Eritrean forces soon after the outset in May last year of the fighting, which broke out anew this month after a relative lull.

Eritrean troops were defending themselves, he told AFP.

At 10:45 a.m. local time, he had declared: "There is no fighting at all up to now."

In the Ethiopian capital, the source said the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was "debating [and...] will soon make its response known," a day after President Issias Afeworki in Asmara agreed to a peace plan.

"A total victory for Ethiopian defence forces was achieved on Friday, Feb. 26, 1999 in the

Council that the Asmara government would accept a peace plan put forward by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), after long stalling over the proposals for troop withdrawals to pre-war positions and neutral demarcation of disputed frontier territory.

The U.N. Security Council welcomed this announcement and called for an immediate end to hostilities between the warring Horn of Africa nations. "During Operation Sunset, Ethiopian defence forces also extended their victory," the Addis Ababa statement said, prior to the statement in Asmara that renewed fighting had begun.

"The enemy has been totally routed out of the area."

"One hundred kilometres of trenches dug and heavily fortified on the border, surrounded by anti-personnel and anti-vehicle landmines, have been captured. The army of President Issias have suffered a monumental and humiliating defeat."

Arafat to discuss statehood with Clinton on March 23

GAZACITY (AP) — Yasser Arafat will meet U.S. President Bill Clinton on March 23 to discuss U.S. and European appeals to the Palestinian leader to postpone a declaration of independence planned for May, a senior Palestinian official said Sunday.

"President Arafat is continuing his programme of discussions with our friends on the statehood issue and will meet with President Clinton on March 23 at the White House," Nabil Shaath, the minister for international cooperation, told AFP.

"For now our plan remains to announce the establishment

of a state on May 4, but we will listen to our friends and are discussing their proposals" for a delay, Shaath said.

The Palestinians assert they have the right to proclaim their independence unilaterally on May 4 when the five-year interim autonomy period agreed with Israel in the Oslo accords expires.

The right-wing Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists existing peace agreements oblige the Palestinians to continue negotiating a permanent arrangement for the occupied territories even after May 4.

Nationalist officials said repeatedly that a statehood

declaration would destroy the peace process and lead Israel to annex parts of the West Bank and take other harsh measures in response.

The United States, Europe and other countries have urged Arafat to delay a statehood move, especially because May 4 will fall at the height of campaigning for Israeli general elections on May 17 and would likely help nationalist hardliners in the polls.

Palestinian officials said Arafat was demanding in exchange for any delay that the United States and Europe back the idea of Palestinian statehood and agree that the postponement of an indepen-

dence declaration will not be too long.

Arafat also wants the international community to step up pressure on Israel to resume implementation of frozen peace accords.

Shaath said Arafat would also discuss the statehood issue in mid-April with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in London and with the foreign ministers of Mediterranean states meeting in mid-April in Stuttgart, Germany.

"All the talks will focus on the independence declaration and other issues concerning the peace process which has been frozen by the Israeli government," Shaath said.

Reformers leading count in Iranian municipal elections

TEHRAN (AP) — Reformers close to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami seem headed for a decisive victory in the Islamic republic's first-ever municipal elections, leading by a 3-1 margin according to preliminary results released Sunday.

Reformers have won 74 municipal seats compared to 23 for conservatives and 12 for independents, according to initial interior ministry tallies from some two dozen of Iran's largest towns published in newspapers here.

Final results from another 50 small villages also gave the edge to reformers in Friday's vote, which was pre-

ceeded by bitter and sometimes violent rivalry between the regime's hardliners and backers of the reformist president vying for some 200,000 seats nationwide.

In the capital, the main battleground between the two factions where 15 council seats are at stake, Khatami supporters headed by former Interior Minister Abdollah Nouri are leading in the polling.

Reformers Mohammad Ibrahim Asgharzadeh, involved in the 1979 hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy, former intelligence ministry chief Said Majarian and former Deputy Interior

Minister Mohammad Arianfar are also faring well.

Candidates from the Islamic liberal opposition are also "very well placed," sources close to the interior ministry said, adding that sociology professor Gholamabbas Tavassoli seems certain to win the Tehran council.

Tavassoli and three other Tehran candidates represented the banned Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI), the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution that the opposition group has been allowed to field hopefuls for office.

In the opposition stronghold city of

Isfahan, reformers appear to have won

handily and are also leading in the provincial capital of Sari on the Caspian Sea.

Women candidates also fared well overall with Jamileh Kadivar, wife of Culture Minister Atollah Mohajerani, getting strong support in Tehran and others enjoying good results in Bahar in the western province of Hamedan.

The victories signal good news for reformers, who may have the opportunity to wrest control of parliament from hardliners in next spring's parliamentary elections.

But the interior ministry said

Saturday it would take several days before final results were published and all results must be approved by the hardliner-dominated Supervisory Council.

The council, which evaluated each candidate and barred a number of prominent moderates from standing, tried to block a dozen reformers, including Nouri, from candidate lists on the eve of the election.

They were allowed to run only after a last-minute ruling from Khatami, in a sign that no matter what the final results, the deep schism between the battling factions is certain to continue.

Five dead from
Step outbreak in
Chicago area